ELITISM IN CONTEMPORARY ART:

INVESTIGATING HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS' RESPONSES TO THE CAPE TOWN ART FAIR

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Thesis presented for the Master's degree in Visual Arts (Art Education) at

the Visual Arts Department, University of Stellenbosch

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March 2017

DECLARATION

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Warwick Goldswain March 2017

ABSTRACT

This research was initiated as a result of my experience as an art learner in a high school and at university, where notable disparities in the approach between the institutions became evident. Traditional schooling seemed out of touch with contemporary strategies, while contemporary art displayed elitist tendencies of its own.

The purpose of this research was to investigate the various manifestations of elitism in contemporary art. Problems included historical elitism in art, as well as contemporary strategies that were difficult to link to movements of the past. In a South African context, issues of concern included the isolation of public and private art entities from the wider demographic, as well as outdated strategies of art education at school level. Secondary purposes of the research were to investigate the response of high school learners to the Cape Town Art Fair (CTAF) and to investigate how school is implicated in creating disparities between education and contemporary art.

The research was conducted using empirical case studies of 24 high school art learners from Curro Durbanville. This adopted the form of a written questionnaire about learners' experiences of the CTAF and focus group discussions about selected artwork from the CTAF. The paradigm for this approach was interpretive, since multiple measures of observation were used. An inductive content analysis method was used in evaluating the data.

The findings of the research were that learners preferred naturalistic art over alternative aesthetic strategies. Learners struggled to comprehend the conceptual content of the work, while strategies of appropriation or irony were generally misinterpreted. The fact that most of the artworks engaged relevant issues made it "different from the art museums", although many learners expressed a desire for more "positive art". Learners noted the diversity of art shown at the CTAF, although it was felt to cater mainly for buyers and those with appreciation for art, and to lack public engagement and space for up-and-coming artists.

The conclusions of the research were that buyer-and-seller models such as the CTAF were largely isolated from the wider demographic of South Africa, who were physically and economically marginalised. The lack of alternative spaces made these models the dominant means of public engagement with art. This was further problematised by the tendency of art to exist in an intellectual and wealthy preserve. School strategies of art production also seemed outdated, adding to the observed disparity. These strategies emphasised narrow ways of seeing perpetuated by an emphasis on "the conquest of visual appearance" and notions of the art object (Danto 1997:125). These strategies were disparate from contemporary trends since they exclude alternative,

connective, intuitive, or spiritual ways of seeing, which might themselves offer possibilities for new ways of being.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie navorsing is aan die gang gesit deur my ervaring as 'n kunsleerder in 'n hoërskool en op universiteit, waar noemenswaardige verskille in die benadering van die instellings duidelik geword het. Dit het geblyk dat tradisionele skoolopleiding uit voeling met huidige strategieë is, terwyl kontemporêre kuns elitistiese tendense van sy eie vertoon.

Die doel van hierdie navorsing was om die verskeie manifestasies van elitisme in kontemporêre kuns te ondersoek. Probleme wat aangespreek is, het historiese elitisme in kuns, sowel as kontemporêre strategieë wat moeilik is om met bewegings van die verlede in verband te bring, betrek. In 'n Suid-Afrikaanse konteks het kwessies wat kommer wek die afsondering van openbare en privaat kunsentiteite weg van die breër demografiese konteks behels, sowel as verouderde strategieë van kunsopvoeding op skoolvlak. Sekondêre doelwitte van die navorsing was om hoërskoolleerders se reaksie op die Kaapstadse Kunsfees (*CTAF*) te ondersoek en ook hoe die skool by die skep van ongelykhede tussen onderwys en kontemporêre kunste betrokke is, te beskou.

Die navorsing is gedoen met behulp van ’n empiriese gevallestudies wat 25 kunsleerders van Curro Durbanville betrek het. Die gevallestudie het die vorm van 'n geskrewe vraelys oor leerders se ervarings van die Kunsfees en fokusgroepbesprekings oor die Kunsfees aangeneem. Die denkraamwerk vir hierdie benadering was interpretatief, aangesien verskeie waarnemingsmaatstawwe gebruik is. Induktiewe inhoudsanalise is vir die ontleding van die data van die gevallestudies aangewend.

Die bevindings is dat leerders naturalistiese kuns verkies teen oor alternatiewe estetiese strategieë. Leerders het gesukkel om die begripsinhoud van die werk te verstaan, terwyl strategieë van toe-eiening of ironie oor die algemeen verkeerd vertolk is. Die feit dat die meeste van die kunswerke relevante kwessies betrek het, het dit "anders as die kunsmuseums" gemaak, maar baie leerders het 'n begeerte vir meer "positiewe kuns" uitgespreek. Leerders het kennis geneem van die diversiteit van die kuns wat by die Kunsfees te sien was, alhoewel hulle gevoel het dat dit hoofsaaklik vir kopers en diegene met waardering vir kuns voorsiening maak, en dat openbare deelname en ruimte vir opkomende kunstenaars ontbreek.

Die gevolgtrekkings was dat koper-en-verkopermodelle soos die Kunsfees grootliks geïsoleerd is van die res van die demografie van Suid-Afrika wat fisies en ekonomies gemarginaliseer is. Die gebrek aan alternatiewe vertoonruimtes maak hierdie modelle die dominante middel vir openbare

betrokkenheid by kuns. Dit is verder geproblematiseer deur die tendens van kuns om in 'n intellektuele en welgestelde omgewing bestaan te vind. Strategieë vir die maak van kuns op skool kom ook verouderd voor en lewer 'n bydrae tot die waargenome verskil. Hierdie strategieë beklemtoon beperkte maniere van kyk wat vanweë die klem op "die verowering van visuele voorkoms" en opvattings oor die kunsobjek bly voortbestaan (Danto, 1997:125). Hierdie strategieë is teenstrydig met kontemporêre idees vanweë hul uitsluiting van alternatiewe, samebindende, intuïtiewe, of geestelike maniere van waarneming, wat self moontlikhede vir nuwe bestaanswyses kan bied.

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CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 INTRODUCTION

South African art has been described as “the most robust and structurally sophisticated visual arts economy in Africa” with a R2 billion turnover per annum (Hagg 2010:7). Contemporary art leads this growth with events such as the Johannesburg Art Fair (JAF) and Cape Town Art Fair (CTAF), with the CTAF drawing in more than 14 000 visitors and almost R30 million in sales in 2016 (Artthrob 2016). South Africa has also “come to assume a significant position in the critical discourse on the contemporary arts, and their role and meaning in a post-colonial context” (Hagg 2010:8).

Despite these positive signs, noticeable polarities remain. South African theorists have been asked to question “why there are so few engagements with alternative audiences and communities in a country marked by extreme inequality” (Costandius & Rosochacki 2013:5) while under-performing public institutions are described as “[doomed] to ossify” (Art Times 2015:8). Other statistics include only 2% of South Africans annually visiting galleries or art museums (Hagg 2010:10) and a tiny pool of approximately 1000 full-time exhibiting artists (ibid., 8), measured against a working population of approximately 25 million.

The aim of this thesis was to investigate these disparities, since “[c]reative thinking and imagination are crucial in all spheres of life and should be developed widely in education and society, not only as the prerogative of a privileged few” (Costandius & Rosochacki 2013:5). This was done with awareness that educators can either perpetuate such polarities or unlock the potential of art learners ‘to make and remake the world’ (Campbell & Martin 2006:53).

1.2 BACKGROUND

My interest in this subject comes from my experience as an art learner in high school and at university. Due to notable disparities in approach between the two, the transition served as a proverbial shock to the system. At school the emphasis was on technical mastery and notions of the art object, while the very idea of art was questioned at university, in challenging established notions of aesthetics, identity and ideologies of dominance. Many undergraduates failed to make this transition, with an estimated 50% dropping out over my four years of study and only a fraction becoming full-time artists after graduating.

I have noticed similar discrepancies between school learners and contemporary practice since becoming an art educator. This is typified by a prolonged emphasis on formalism, realistic art or

notions of the art object with strategies of contemporary art only introduced in grade 10 or 11. The ability to develop multiple strategies of thinking and production is therefore limited, as is the idea of transcending elitist spaces and materiality. City learners are advantaged through more cosmopolitan upbringings, in which multiple ways of being are experienced. School, however, remains implicated in these institutional disparities.

Contemporary art, on the other hand, displays elitist tendencies with analysts noting the "somewhat informal and unregulated character of the industry itself" (Hagg 2010:9). These include institutions being located in historically wealthy areas and keeping to a small circle of sophisticated producers and consumers (Costandius & Rosochacki 2013:4). Other unhelpful tendencies include perceptions that "they only love what's new and shocking" (Wolf 2006), artwork that is "shown or sold with a garnish of rhetoric" (Beckett 2013) and the elevation of novelty over traditional art-making skills (Johnson 2003:729).

It is with these issues in mind that I chose to investigate the response of high school learners to the CTAF. While my initial thoughts were focused on the elitist nature of contemporary art, it became clear that educational practice was also implicated. It is in the hope of creating a more workable relationship between school, society and contemporary art that these discrepancies are discussed.

The following section focuses on the problem statement, research question and purpose of my research study.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT, RESEARCH QUESTION AND PURPOSE

1.3.1 Describing the problem

The issue of elitism in contemporary art is multi-faceted. In historical terms, elitism in art was essentially established through the privatisation of European culture by the ruling class in the 1700s (Berger 1972:32). While the boom of mass media in the 20th century has meant increased appropriation of working class or kitsch culture, art has remained an essentially bourgeois preserve (Hopkins 2000:248). Unconventional pluralistic strategies in contemporary art have developed in this autonomous vein often leaving audiences "without any way to connect the eclectic art of the present with the art of the past" (Heartney 2008:9).

In a South African context, this divide has taken on racial significance, with public art institutions representing "in their form, content and location… the institutional legacy of an apartheid economy" (Hagg 2010:12). According to Hundt the lack of government funding, co-ordination and public interaction with these structures further "dooms them to social irrelevance" (Art Times 2015:8).

Hundt goes on to note that "without [the public art gallery] the art market will be held captive to who can write the biggest cheque" (ibid.).

The rise in the popularity of fairs such as the JAF and CTAF have largely filled the void left by public institutions. With a combined turnover of over R70 million in 2016, they have become the focus events of South African contemporary art, successfully achieving their goal of "[growing] a sustainable industry for the arts with a solid base of local and international buyers" (Joburg Art Fair 2016). However this is also essentially a buyer and seller business model with strong links to international trends and patrons (Art Times 2015:8). Located near the Cape Town Waterfront and Sandton respectively, they represent a wealthy and westernised space with limited educational ambitions.

Art education in general is underdeveloped and niched, with only 2% of all students in government institutions taking visual arts as a subject in 2009 (Hagg 2010:16). Art centres established near disadvantaged communities in the 1990s remain under-funded and mismanaged (ibid., 13), while the attrition rate of students trying to enter the art industry from university is described as "very high" (ibid., 17). Schools are implicated in this disparity since,

> [T]oday's students regularly complete school art programs that are based on elements and principles, traditional academic techniques, and perhaps also, modern art styles – none of which give students the tools to understand contemporary art or even a great deal of modern artwork.
>
> (Gude 2000:2)

The general problem can therefore be described as school learners and the wider public being ill-equipped and isolated from structures of contemporary art. Contemporary art in itself perpetuates this divide through elitist tendencies, compounded by lack of government support and engagement (Hagg 2010:8). This links with the sixth objective stated in the HSRC report of promoting greater coherence between the art industry and related structures (2010:7).

1.3.2 Research questions, aims and objectives of the study

The main research question in this study was:

How is elitism manifested in contemporary art?

The sub-questions were:

a) What was the response of high school learners to the CTAF?

b) How is school involved in creating disparities between education and contemporary art?

The aim of my research was:

To investigate manifestations of elitism in contemporary art.

The research objectives were:

a) To identify issues of elitism at the CTAF.

b) To identify trends in learner response to the CTAF.

c) To identify disparities between education and contemporary art.

1.4 OVERVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGY FOR THE RESEARCH

My approach to the research was inductive, which involved developing a theory by using various existing theories and my own case studies. The nature of my research was empirical, since it was based on observations from case studies involving art learners at high school.

The case studies made use of open-ended questions inviting written learner responses to the CTAF. A dialectical approach was used in focus group discussions, where learners were asked to discuss and critique their experience of the CTAF. Multiple opinions were encouraged, with the educator assuming the role of facilitator as opposed to teacher. Facilitation took place through written questions, oral questions and discussion and visual prompts. The paradigm for this approach was therefore interpretive, since multiple measures of observation were used.

The inductive content analysis method was used when analysing the data from the case studies, whereby key elements were identified and then reduced to main themes (Mouton 2001:148). The researched was ethically cleared by the Research Ethics Committee: Division for Research Development of Stellenbosch University. Further description of the research design is covered in Chapter 4.

1.5 BOUNDARIES AND LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

While the aim of the research was to investigate trends in contemporary art, the implications for a thorough overview of the industry made such an undertaking unrealistic. Limitations to this research are therefore qualified.

The case study in particular was limited to the responses of 24 art learners with reference to a school outing to the CTAF. In this regard, the research was focused on the disparities between learner's understanding of art and their experience of the CTAF. The research is therefore contained to experiences of art in a high school context and learner responses to the CTAF.

Issues such as elitism in South African art and contemporary art were extracted mainly from secondary data, although primary data from the case study also shed light on these issues. Every effort was made to use a wide range of sources in this regard, since there is much existing coverage of these issues. However the nature of using secondary data to cover such wide-ranging issues implies the possibility of the author's perceptions and inaccuracies.

1.6 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

Chapter 1 provides a general introduction and a discussion of the orientation to the research. This includes my motivation for the research, a description of the problem to which I have responded, the aims and the methodologies that I used.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Chapter 2 presents the various theoretical perspectives that were used to contextualise the research in a broader sense. This includes institutional elitism, elitism in South African art, public perceptions of contemporary art, anti-formalism, and disparities that occur between school and contemporary practice.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter 4 discusses the research design and methodology that was used in order to investigate the research problem formulated in Chapter 1.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATIONS

Chapter 4 presents data collected from two case studies with learners in which their responses to the CTAF were documented. The data is categorised into themes. Findings from these are discussed.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS:

Chapter 5 presents the conclusions from the findings and implications derived from learner responses reported in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss elitism in art, focussing on its various manifestations in a historical, contemporary, South African and educational context. This starts with a discussion on institutional elitism, followed by elitism in South African art, public perceptions of contemporary art, anti-formalism, and the disparity between strategies of art production at school and contemporary art.

2.2 INSTITUTIONAL ELITISM

The visual arts have always occupied a certain preserve, separated from ordinary life in order to inform or exercise power over it (Berger 1972:32). Most pre-Renaissance art, however, was socially cohesive by way of accessible style or public location (Johnson 2003:12). Examples such as the cathedrals of the Middle Ages were usually the work of unknown artisans who conformed to well-known canonical styles, as was much of Greek and Roman art (Campbell & Martin 2006:53). The elevation of craftsmen to the status enjoyed by post-Renaissance artists challenged such accessibility, however, since both the narrative of art and its collection became preserves of the upper class. As art became high art and its monetary value increased, so too did the desire of the upper class to own it. As such art was "[physically] set apart and isolated in their palaces and houses" (Berger 1972:32).

It is argued that such elitism has been insidiously carried over into the modern art museum (Berger 1972:11). While some type of framework is needed to systematise art production, giving it a specific space and network of production, the level of disconnect between white-walled art spaces and complex urban living urges a re-thinking of how culture is represented in a supposedly democratic, inclusive age. Although museums appear to serve public interests, mystification surrounding 'the art object' has generally limited the relevance of modern museums to the upper class (ibid., 21). This mystification is encouraged by the exorbitant prices fetched for most historical art, in which the market value often overshadows the real value of the artwork (ibid.).

Another factor informing the idea of the museum as a preserve of high art was critic Clement Greenberg's reaction to kitsch. Kitsch, a German word for tacky or decorative art, rose to new levels of popularity during the 1950s as buying power in the American middle and lower classes increased. Greenberg responded by defining Modern art as an aesthetic of purity, true to its own medium and separated from mainstream culture (Hopkins 2000:73). In his defence of a purist art, Greenberg paved the way for the development of Abstract Expressionism and America's first internationally

recognised style. However, such puritanism also entrenched the idea of high art and the museum as an elitist preserve.

Mystification of the work of the artist is also encouraged through the educated lens needed for its decoding. Tertiary education, or the role of the critic, therefore becomes a defining factor in appreciating such art, since knowledge of the historical context is crucial. A 1969 survey of Paris citizens indicated a 15 to 20 percent increase in museum viewers depending on whether they had tertiary education or only a primary education (Berger 1972:32). The same survey indicated that 66% of working class participants thought of an art museum as similar to a traditional church, in which an aura of mysticism surrounds holy relics (ibid.).

Mystification is further perpetuated by Eurocentric intellectualism in the way art is produced and written about. This symbiosis between art and text continues in institutions of contemporary art, producing a closed system of intellectualism that rarely ventures beyond Eurocentric referencing or ways of thinking (Costandius & Rosochacki 2013:5). Such writing typically uses highly rarefied and encoded language, becoming an entity in itself known as 'artspeak'. Beckett notes:

> With its pompous paradoxes and its plagues of adverbs, its endless sentences and its strained rebellious poses, much of this promotional writing serves mainly, it seems, as ammunition for those who still insist contemporary art is a fraud.
>
> (Beckett, 2013)

Beckett admits that artspeak originates from a sincere intention to subvert authoritarian master narratives through alternative dialogue. Such language in this sense is more finely coded and able to express concepts in subtle new ways. However, it now seems to have become a way of selling art "with a garnish of rhetoric", adding value through its mystified, intellectual air (ibid.). The result has not only made art more elitist to viewers but is also oppressive to artists who feel trapped within an intellectual system (ibid.). The Frankfurt School critique suggests a deeper reason for this elitism, noting that the free market system is in effect driven by those with the most capital, the haute bourgeois (Costandius & Rosochacki 2013:4). Any art system, no matter its cosmopolitan intentions, is still funnelled through this grid of patrons who remain wealthy and Eurocentric (ibid.).

Not only is contemporary patronage still elitist, but the nature of contemporary art remains suited to bourgeois philosophy. This is the western notion of art as inherently autonomous, set in motion by private patronage of the Renaissance and reaching its height under the modernist mantra of 'art for art's sake'. While the idea of autonomy seems antagonistic to classist manipulation, Costandius and Rosochacki argue that "the autonomous space created for art functions as a safety valve, in which

social critique may be contained and action be deferred" (ibid., 4). The result is a pseudo-liberation and political powerlessness, since art institutions remain the consumers and patrons of the autonomous yet ultimately co-opted artist (ibid., 3).

Schecher describes the condition of the contemporary artist as both inside and outside, at once a consumer of mainstream culture and a culture critic, a disassembler of kitsch who is versed in the intellectualism of western patrons. This is a unique position, since artists are for the first time able to appropriate working class culture into high art, an eclectic situation or 'Warholism' that is unique to contemporary art (Campbell & Martin 2006:38).

However, such straddling of the fence has its difficulties, especially when the patronage of art has remained in the essentially unchanged hands of the upper-middle class. Schecher notes, "Paradoxically, as long as the artist is unsuccessful, she can flaunt her outsider position; but when success kisses her, or even while trying to make it, she must play the game" (in Campbell & Martin 2006:38). Successful artists, those who are becoming or who have become well known in the industry, are therefore incorporated into a closed system where bourgeois patronage pull the strings, even if the language of art is proletariat pop culture. Schecher describes 'the game' as pleasing patrons or producers and that the idea of the autonomous rebel artist working within art institutions is not economically viable or even true (in Campbell & Martin 2006:39).

Johnson suggests the oligarchy of art patronage originated from the 1870s, when private art dealers began to eclipse art academies and public institutions (Johnson 2003:651). This was particularly true in Paris, with the city attracting the greatest concentration of skilled artisans in the world due to its cheap art studios and abundance of art galleries (ibid.). Paris was also the home of the fashion industry starting from the mid-1850s, resulting in the development of art movements that were fashionable yet short-lived (ibid.).

Johnson describes this as the birth of 'fashion art', when the emphasis on novelty began to outweigh genuine skill (ibid., 661). Cubism, of Parisian origin and seen as the first real fashion art movement, led to a flurry of cubist imitators, the popularity of which was dead within 20 years of its birth (ibid., 665). Fashion art in the 1950s then took hold in America, the new giant of middle class consumerism, and, as Greenberg lamented, the chief producer of kitsch. The result was increased privatisation and commercialisation of art institutions at the expense of aesthetic standards or public approval (ibid., 729). The free market thus allows "[t]he power of money values to determine the merits of works of art, the ability of a small number of individuals and institutions to determine those values" (ibid., 728).

Johnson's criticism of art institutions should be taken with a pinch of salt, however, since he is a staunch defender of western formalism. This is seen when he laments '[the] pitifully small number of beautiful objects created in the last 50 years' or that 'no great painter or sculptor has emerged in the last five decades' (ibid., 728). While institutional elevation of the concept above traditional art-making skills has pushed many artists into the role of post-production editors, Johnson seems to be clinging to the idea of aesthetics as the primary criterion for art. On one hand this is understandable, given that formalist training has sustained many well-known fashion artists such as Picasso, Hockney or Kitaj beyond the immediacy of their movements. Formalism, on the other hand, is too readily associated with exclusive or heavy-handed modernist movements, explaining the necessary swing away from aesthetics of beauty to aesthetics of meaning.

This emphasis on philosophy, aesthetics of meaning or 'what is art' seems to be inclusive and diverse, as exemplified in Danto's claim that 'Anything can [now] be art' (1997:125). Perhaps early conceptual artists such as Beuys (or Duchamp) lived with a truer sense of going against the formalist grain, since notions of dematerialisation were not yet institutionalised, hence were more genuinely avant-garde. As time has passed however, many of these radical notions that underpin the contemporary have become institutionalised, with professionalised learning at a tertiary level closely tailored to the trends and demands of the industry. Campbell and Martin note that "in 1980, 20 percent of the working directors had been to film school. By the year 2000 that number had gone up to 80 percent" (2006:8).

While this is perhaps a sincere attempt to counteract ivory tower education, it is problematic for several reasons. The first is that the art industry now risks becoming a preserve for those who can afford tertiary training, which is increasingly expensive and classist. The second is that it attacks the liberal arts ideal of a holistic learner, one who is not subordinated to the demands of labour or the encroachment of capitalism in an educational environment (ibid., 6).

This cannot be seen as capitalist interference only, but also as the long arm of art institutions that disseminate their influence and expectations to artists-in-training. This suggests that contemporary art institutions wield more power than in times past, growing learners according to their parameters of what is in or out, wielding "[a] power both to create and render invisible" (Johnson 2003:730). Johnson goes on,

> They are part of an art establishment, a self-reinforcing, self-perpetuating oligarchy, which includes art magazines, critics, professional patrons, and most importantly, museum directors… which work in conjunction with state bodies to award art prizes such

> as the Venice Biennale and Turner Prize.
>
> (ibid., 730).

It is tempting to regard Johnson's comment as 'sour grapes', however, since any art establishment will inevitably overlook certain types of art while pursuing that which is seen as progressive or more reflective of the time in which we live. The root word for contemporary, 'con tempus', after all refers to the connection with a specific time, *this time* in which we live, a time of unequalled connectivity yet inequality, a time of new, old and multiple identities, a unique time (Smith 2009:2). In this sense, contemporary art cannot be a simple continuation of formalism but necessitates engagement with the clashing cosmopolitan world we find ourselves in.

And yet, for all the uniqueness of this contemporary spirit, there remains the inevitable insecurities of artists and institutions that follow trends longer than they should, motivated less by progressive art and more by fear of being 'out' or 'old'. Hughes and Kramer have taken particular aim at the perceived over-abundance of 'identity art', bemoaning the 'culture of complaint' and victimhood that often undergirds such work, a perpetual de-construction that avoids re-construction or cohesive ambitions (Heartney 2008:366).

2.3 ELITISM IN SOUTH AFRICAN ART

Colin Richards, in his 1991 essay, stresses the continued fight for a 'free culture' in South Africa, something only possible if artists resist co-option into existing power structures that perpetuate inequality or indifference, even if they parade themselves as inclusive (Costandius & Rosochacki 2013:5). Since almost all institutions were shaped by apartheid policy, it seems logical that South Africa would pursue policies of transformation as a result of its democratic turn. After more than 20 years however, Costandius and Rosochacki suggest that the fight for an inclusive culture is in jeopardy, asking "why there are so few engagements with alternative audiences and communities in a country marked by extreme inequality" (ibid.). Continued post-apartheid equalities, while a common subject of South African artists, are often confined within isolated art institutions and elitist power structures. This trend is continued at international level, where South African art is frequently recognised as an important contributor to postcolonial narrative, yet is offset by extremely low public interaction with art (Hagg 2010:10).

Spatial divisions in South African cities remain a major factor in the lack of public interaction with art institutions. Engineered along racial lines during apartheid, city planning used "both natural landscape features and manmade infrastructure…as physical barriers to keep the different racial communities as isolated as possible" (Wainwright 2014). Public art institutions remain isolated from

these communities since "[t]hey represent – in their location, built form and contents – the institutional legacy of an apartheid economy that invested significantly in a costly public arts infrastructure designed for the consumption of a minority in the population" (Hagg 2010:12). Community Arts Centres of the 1990s, while geographically more accessible, remain 'white elephants' due to economic and leadership mismanagement (ibid., 13).

Education is similarly marked by inequality despite equal access. A polarity persists between small professionalised industries and large pools of under-educated people, setting the stage for an elitist relationship between art and the general public. South Africa's art industry displays this trend with 70% of practising artists having a tertiary education, yet with almost 60% of the wider population not having completed a secondary education (Hagg 2010:8). Art is also considered a luxury subject in a South African context, with the hard sciences taking preference in poorer schools. Costandius and Rosochacki argue that this reinforces existing systems of inequality, since creative thinking is essential for addressing deep-seated societal issues which are often accepted as status quo (2013:8). Creative thinking and imagination are resultantly "crucial in all spheres of life and should be developed widely in education and society, not only as the prerogative of a privileged few" (ibid.).

Another important educational structure is the public art museum that, in the past, acted as mediator between the artistic avant-garde and public sensibilities. As an example, France's *Musée des Artiste Vivants* (Museum of the Living Artists) was used in 19th century as a museum of passage where artworks deemed worthy of collection were only moved to the permanent collections such as the Louvre 10 years after the artist's death (Smith 2009:29). This was considered a way of involving public opinion so as to distinguish "the serious contribution from the passing fad" (ibid.) Hundt echoes this sentiment saying -

> A building block of a healthy visual arts industry is the public art gallery, as it represents the unbiased and well considered judgement of an artist's work deserving of acclamation. Without this the art market will be held captive to who can write the biggest cheque.
>
> (Art Times 2015:8)

Hundt goes on to note the chronic lack of funding for South African public art institutions, limiting their ability to acquire important contemporary art and stimulate discussion. A lack of leadership and inability to invite public participation further 'dooms them to social irrelevance' (ibid.). Statistics for 2010 show that annual public attendance of art galleries and museums is measured at only 2% of the total SA population (Hagg 2010:10).

The platform for public participation in the arts has instead been largely replaced by the growing popularity of art fairs. While the continued growth of both the Cape Town and the Johannesburg Art Fair is an economic boost for the industry, this is primarily a business model based on a buyer and seller elite, and not a forum for public discussion (Art Times 2015:8). The reduced role of public institutions plays into a potentially elitist situation since "[u]ntil the public reclaims its right to applause and condemn, the art of our age will remain in the dark, the self-indulgent plaything of a few" (Spalding in Campbell & Martin 2006:25). While efforts have been made to include forums for public discussion at art fairs, is still a secondary agenda and one that needs a more authentic public platform to enable it.

Validation therefore increasingly comes from the international market, with the CTAF emphasising that "[c]ontemporary art in Africa [is] on the tip of the world's tongues" (Art Times 2016:8) and that "much of the work on display is new to the international market adding to its desirability" (Cape Town Art Fair 2016). The CTAF also markets itself alongside the idea of "Cape Town [being] a cultural centre that is driven by tourism" with a favourable exchange rate (ibid.). While the CTAF lays out a diversity of aims including "[creating] a dialogue around educational practices", it is essentially marketed as the premier space for international buying and collecting of African art. This is understandably important for its economic sustainability and that of the local art industry, with art fairs traditionally modelled on trade interests. However it is the lack of alternative art spaces that gives the CTAF pre-eminence in establishing the identity of local contemporary art, which in this case is slanted toward foreign buying power and the gallery system.

A special project dedicated to emerging artists was included at this year's fair as a way of increasing diversity. Curator Azu Nwagbogu explained the idea as "[giving] younger artists a chance to be part of the fair and also because…traditionally fairs are under a lot of pressure to make money back from their big investments" (Artthrob 2016) However, he admitted that "The one restricting factor for us was…we could only show people who had a gallery in the Fair" (ibid.). Diversity was thus limited by the gallery system, with non-contracted or underprivileged artists excluded.

This touches on the relationship between artistic autonomy and the market, which most have accepted as a necessary tension. Ray, however, describes the relationship as 'irreconcilable and antagonistic', since autonomy ultimately plays second fiddle to classist ideology. Ray suggests such art becomes depoliticised by these interests, where it is exhibited in an exclusive space, esteemed by price and removed from public or politics on purchase (Ray 2006:3). She suggests active contestation of these spaces, either through active critique or alternative non-institution spaces (ibid., 4).

Such initiatives are especially necessary since the number of gallery-contracted artists remains extremely low in South Africa. Private galleries cite lack of government support and high cost of art fairs as reasons for contracting a limited number of artists or staying with older, established ones (Hagg 2010:11). The same seems true of national galleries with only 5% of the national heritage museum budget going toward art museums (ibid., 15). The average income of artists is also below average, at R12 500 per month, resulting in over 80% of artists working in other part-time or full-time jobs (ibid., 12). Combined with the highly professionalised training necessary for the arts industry, these figures are most disadvantageous toward those of low income, perpetuating inequality in the arts.

2.4 PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Canonised art of the past, by virtue of synthesis over time, is generally predictable and palatable, with audiences knowing what to expect. Contemporary art, on the other hand, is more volatile, since it undergoes less filtering, thereby inviting a variety of raw response to the present. Gertrude Stein noted this polarity in her time, commenting that "[y]ou can't be both" (Smith 2009:29). While certain exceptions such the Tate Modern have managed to engage in both, audiences for the most part prefer to choose between historical institutions and those that represent the contemporary, since they represent different philosophies of art.

This tension between art of the past and of the present is not a new phenomenon, as France's *Musée des Artiste Vivants* of the 19th century suggests. Contemporary art, however, is unique in that it does not follow a philosophical continuum from previous western art movements. Whereas western art from the Renaissance to Modernism focused on the progression of aesthetics, contemporary art has not. Instead, it questions the very idea of art, casting off all previous boundaries and inviting multiple perspectives. It is therefore amorphous, and unrestricted by medium or taboo, in rejecting any linear understanding, the idea of progression or a master narrative of art. Audiences have apparently had a difficult time adjusting to this non-linear jump, often being left "in a state of complete confusion, without any way to connect the eclectic art of the present with the art of the past" (Heartney 2008:9).

Fear of the new or unknown has led many to stereotype contemporary art as wayward, rebellious and self-alienating. In a 1999 episode from the Simpsons entitled 'Mom and Pop Art', Homer is courted by gallery owner Astrid Weller (an anagram for 'sell weird art') after his failed barbecue pit is mistakenly viewed as readymade art. When Homer fails to impress the art world at his second readymade exhibition of beat-up appliances, Marge comforts him with "Homer, I'm afraid they only love what's new and shocking. These pieces are just like your earlier work" (Wolf 2006).

Early publicity around contemporary art tended to side with such stereotyping, focusing on shows that stirred up controversy. Charles Saatchi's 1997 'Sensation' exhibition is such an example; a record 300,000 visitors descended on works by largely unknown young British artists, stoked by media attention on the largely shocking content. Saatchi himself seemed to court controversy when he played off the British Pop Art manifesto saying,

> What is it about the life cycle of flies, someone's old bed, a portrait of a child killer made with children's handprints, mannequins with knobs on, someone sitting on a toilet with a cistern that makes British art so different, so appealing?
>
> (Smith 2009:50)

As an experienced advertising executive, Saatchi was well versed in the aesthetics of provocation as a means to create interest, which Heartney describes as a major characteristic of contemporary art (2008:17). Marizio Cattelan has similarly been lauded as "our reigning artist-provocateur", once staging a fake biennale in which artists were flown to the Caribbean for a holiday in the sun (ibid., 21). When the dust has settled, however, notable artists have emerged from provocative movements such as the Young British Artists (YBAs) to forge meaningful careers, including Damian Hirst's continued musings on mortality and Jenny Saville's beautifully rendered yet challenging self-portraits of the female body.

While stereotypes inevitable contain an element of truth, they must be seen for their place in history, usually as a means of cheaply dealing with hidden insecurities regarding the new or unknown. Contemporary art, still in its infancy, represents this unknown factor, a sharp break from the canonised aesthetic of Modernism, which, with the benefit of time, has become familiar territory for the public. It must be remembered that Modernism in its infancy was similarly ridiculed as a fad, with Impressionists such as Monet and Degas initially rejected by the French Academy of Fine Arts and the Fauvists labelled 'wild beasts'.

What is perhaps different to modernism, however, is that many contemporary artists have actively courted controversy. American artist Jeff Koons is one of the self-publicised bad boys of contemporary art whose sexually explicit billboards and sculptures are deliberately provocative. Koons, like the YBAs, has also mellowed with age, however, producing crowd-pleasers such as the monumental flower-adorned 'Puppy' sculpture and balloon installations.

Deliberate flirtations with controversy and taboo, however, have meant that dismissive stereotyping has tended to linger around contemporary art more than with preceding movements. It is for this

reason that a polarised perception among the public remains. For many of the older generation it has contributed to the idea of art as an elitist space for young irreligious rabble-rousers, as seen in the resurgence of reactive conservative politicians. For institutions willing to engage, filter and curate contemporary art, however, it has also breathed new life into the industry. Tate Modern recorded 25 million visitors in the first nine years since its 2000 opening, 60 percent of whom were under 25 years old (Smith, 2009:66).

2.5 ANTI-FORMALISM

While contemporary art is often defined as anachronistic and discontinued from any previous western narrative, it seems united in identifying a common source of reaction that gives it a tenuous link to its predecessor, modernism. The bone of contention was the modernist emphasis on formalism, the aesthetic properties of an artwork, as the paradigm in which all art should be made and judged. Formalism reached its height under the modernist critic Clement Greenberg, who emphasised a 'rightness of form' to which art should aspire.

While contemporary thought criticised formalism as narrow and rigid, it is worth considering that western art has built on formalist ideas for the majority of its existence, and as such cannot be easily discarded. Greek, Roman and Renaissance art, still major drawcards for global tourism, prided itself on the "conquest of visual appearance", turning representational skill into an art form (Danto 1997:125). The 1st-century Roman story according to which an artist painted grapes so realistically that a bird tried to eat it, illustrates this (Heartney 2008:96).

Western art, up until modernism, thus represents a period of relative "canonical calm" in which the mode of realism was bought to perfection (Johnson 2003:5). This is the main benefit of operating within a canonised style, since it provides the stability and focus needed for enhancement and achievement (ibid., 5). Meyer Schapiro, commenting on the rigid patronage of old, notes that "[t]his state of affairs [in the Renaissance] does not seem to have choked inspiration…Many great works were made to satisfy a command" (Schapiro 1994:202). The irony of great art being produced within a closed formalist system must not escape us, just as the contemporary promise that 'anything can be art' should not be simplistically accepted. Schapiro suggests that the dialectic relationship between freedom and responsibility is "the unfinished business of the social philosophy of the arts" (ibid., 207).

Perhaps the contemporary cry against formalism is not so much directed against aesthetic art itself. It is more probably a reaction against the attitude behind it, an increasingly dogmatic essentialism that resulted in "the age of manifestos", a strict code of what (and therefore who) was in or out

(Smith 2009:1). Contemporary art's open-endedness masks this fear that "the natural order of things always capitulates to some kind of controlling ideology" (Heartney 2008:10).

It is worth noting that elitism, the very thing contemporary art has reacted against, appears insidious and difficult to avoid. Modernism, which became quintessentially elitist, was founded on the aspiration to free art from the restraints of content, the idea that art would serve no master but itself, or 'art for art's sake'. Thus it is in the rally cry of freedom that elitism slips through the backdoor, in the self-congratulatory mode of liberator, blind to its own exclusivity. Contemporary art is no different and it is for this reason that Schapiro hints at the "unfinished business" between freedom and responsibility (1994:207).

It is the responsibility of art to communicate and be accessible that is most at stake when the freedoms of the artist are as heavily touted as they are in contemporary art. Whenever art loses sight of this tension, it runs the danger of becoming increasingly elitist, and forgetting its audience. Formalism reached both its pinnacle and exhaustion through Abstract Expressionism, producing an art of unique beauty that ultimately failed in its ability to communicate the concrete issues of its time, thereby becoming escapist.

Contemporary art runs this same risk when it values freedom of expression above communication or accessibility. Through its arm-wrestle with modernism, art has won an important victory, one that democratises all mediums and methods as equally valid, whether material or non-material. Danto enthuses about this victory when he says that "now that [formalism] was over, artists were liberated to do whatever they wanted to do" (1997:125). In the euphoria of this victory, however, care must be taken not to forget the audience and their ability to access contemporary art.

Some anti-formalist art is problematic in this regard. Malevich's 'White on white' and Rauschenberg's 'White Paintings' hung from the ceiling are extreme examples of an attack on the art object and its intentionality. By emptying the paintings of any content or a luxury aesthetic, both artists have attempted to erase their authorship and the aura of high art, instead inviting the audience to project their own meaning onto what are essentially blank canvasses (Hopkins 2000:42). Such art runs the risk of displaying "a kind of puritan iconophobia", though (ibid., 177). Artists have even offered written blurbs while removing any trace of the art object, as an act of defiance against the over-abundance of real-world objects (ibid., 178). It is true, on the other hand, that "art had been hampered by its physical embodiment" and that an elevation of the conceptual thought was necessary (ibid., 177). Extreme anti-formalist art is therefore difficult and silent, but its victory over narrow formalism justifies the overall intent.

2.6 DISPARITIES BETWEEN SCHOOL AND CONTEMPORARY PRACTICE

Realism is deeply rooted in western tradition, with the "conquest of visual appearance" seen as the Renaissance ideal (Danto 1997:125). Visual art education at school level has traditionally taught realism as foundational, the ability to create a skilled, convincing aesthetic. Since contemporary art is only introduced as late as grades 10 and 11, however, realism is emphasised for the majority of traditional school experience, giving learners a strong formalist slant. Art history also tends to reference realistic or naturalistic art, with learners from a young age becoming familiar with masters of technique such Da Vinci and Michelangelo. Gude describes this as "the obsession that a kind of technological perfection is a precondition for effective communication" (2000:4). As a result of this, learners are typically rewarded for being those who can 'draw the best', paint realistically, or capture reality 'accurately'.

The development of oil painting has added to this ideal since it convincingly reproduced the solidarity of objects, while capturing the lustre of materials such as silk and precious metals (Berger 1972:88). This method of representation lives on today since "colour photography is to the spectator-buyer what oil painting was to the spectator-owner" (ibid., 140). This is particularly relevant since "human experience is now more visual and visualized than ever before" (Mirzoeff 2002:4), with Americans alone taking more photos in two minutes than were made in the entire nineteenth century and (Mirzoeff 2015:4). Western realism is therefore perpetuated through the youthful popularity of digital media and photography as a seemingly uncontested way of seeing. This way of seeing is also linked to ideas of grand achievement, beauty or utopia.

World events in the mid-20th century threatened to break this dream however, with the Holocaust in Europe and the messy exit of colonial powers from former colonies. Hopkins stresses that "art could no longer exist in an aesthetic bubble" with continued ideas of utopia and untroubled beauty (Hopkins 2000:1). Instead it necessitated a "resistant character… [in order not to] become ineffectual and compromised" (ibid.). Art since the 1960s has therefore become increasingly de-constructivist, challenging long-held western notions, including the notion of art as an aesthetic comfort. Danto concludes that "[a]esthetics seems increasingly inadequate to deal with art after the 1960s" (Danto 1997:85).

Art education at school level, has been slow to embrace de-constructivist notions of art, though. This perhaps is a reaction to the open-ended or amorphous nature of contemporary art and the idea that "nothing can be considered truly foundational at this time" (Gude 2000:3), or that "style, geography or medium no longer work as means of classification" (Heartney 2008:11). The traditional idea of

school, instead, is as a place of predetermined learning, with teachers suspicious of conflict or open-ended, dialectical learning (Apple 1979:102). This is echoed in narrow representational or realistic art strategies, making the multi-faceted nature of life "reducible to objects" (Danto 1997:125). Such strategies can prove resistant to critical thinking.

Maxine Greene stresses that critical thinking does not happen naturally. In bemoaning the touristic approach to art museums, Greene states that, "[w]ithout time spent, without tutoring, and without dialogue…people merely look for the right labels. They look for the artists' names" (1995:382). Schools are complicit in perpetuating this mind-set, since standardisation of curriculum and media oversaturation can lead to "[t]he complacent repetition of 'truths' which have become trivial and empty" (ibid., 380). Authentic art however, should counter trivial repetitions, since it is "full of thoughts not necessarily yet couched in language" (Massumi 2004). Massumi describes this type of art as essentially experimental, emotional and non-verbal (ibid.).

This is counter to quantifiable systems of knowledge embraced by western education, such as photographic, realistic or illusionistic art (Drinkwater 2011:1). It prevents learners from using more visceral, emotional strategies such as impressionism, automatism and free association, strategies that often "unlock subconscious dilemmas" (ibid., 4). This furthers learner disconnection with contemporary art, since such strategies are often used in abstract, naive or outsider art. These genres, in turn, are important for fostering sympathetic, relational tendencies because they better capture "the cacophony of lived experience"(Kincheloe 2005:4) through their unfiltered process. School art thus not only runs the risk of promoting narrow visual strategies, but narrow ways of being.

Post-colonial writers argue for the use of such alternative strategies of knowing, noting that history is "alive and contestable" despite the positivist slant of western education (Dei & Kempf 2006:129). Hanlon also argues for alternative knowledge systems when he says, "History it seems to me can be sung, danced, chanted, spoken, carved, woven, painted, sculptured and rapped as well as written" (ibid., 152). Learners, however, often are not primed for such experimentalism, instead finding contentment and commendation through the aforementioned scientific forms of representation.

The disjunction between prescriptive, realistic art and open-ended strategies can be further explored using Barthes' reception theory, by which he suggests that the viewer does not passively receive but actively negotiates meaning according to cultural or personal background (Heartney 2008:123). Meaning is therefore dialectical or conversational instead of prescriptive. A sense of self or authorship is lightly held, since it is seen as constructed, subjective and fallible. Atkinson describes this flux of identity as our "multiple messy selves" resulting in "a stammering knowing" (2001:308).

The author and his or her intent is therefore just one of the many elements involved, while audience reception and negotiation of meaning is regarded as equally important. Reception theory therefore counters the idea an elite artwork transmitting predetermined meaning.

Authentic exposure to the social sciences is vital in this regard, since the social sciences stimulate thinking on issues of identity and the constructed nature of collective identity. A lack of exposure to this or an undervaluing of subjects such as Life Orientation or History can lead to parochial worldviews and rigid, defensive identities. If art learners are unused to such approaches, they usually default to some form of realism, however, hiding the unique subjectivity or imperfections of the artwork. They also risk engaging with contemporary art without the patience required for dealing with the nuances of constructivist narrative, which uses a combination of incomplete, veiled, micro or pluralistic narratives (Heartney 2008:123). This is minimalistic storytelling which requires a patient viewer to 'put the pieces together'.

Apple argues that all new knowledge comes from a place of incompleteness and tension, since it is in the cauldron of conflict and problem solving that the breakthrough comes (1979:83). Knowledge or systems of representation that are too clean-cut or abstracted tend to hide this fact, even though it is essential to creating new knowledge. The naturalising of curriculum, when it is taught as a smooth story, is one way in which school creates unrealistic narratives (ibid., 83). Aesthetics tend to suffer the same fate, since learners are often commended for capturing a moment smoothly or 'just like a photograph'.

This approach is particularly incongruent on the socio-economic level, since pluralism has been defined as "*the* modern political problem" in the form of cosmopolitan societies (Weinstein 2003:1). It is this tension that contemporary art has embraced, entering into robust conversation around current geo-politics and multi-national identities. While school has in some cases started to deal with content surrounding these issues, some obstacles are evident. The first is that smooth, simplified concepts of cosmopolitanism and globalisation abound. These are typically soft, with non-western cultures depicted as seamless new additions to existing knowledge economies or tourism destinations (Delacruz 2009:88). Learners are therefore predisposed to such thinking, buying in to naturalised representations of western supremacy (Andreotti 2006:44).

This leads to the problem of relevant visual strategies not being used. Since the reality of cultural diversity is not a simple co-existence, but one of "complex connectivity", Marshall suggests the strategies of juxtaposition, pastiche and layering (Delacruz 2009:89). All three are essentially deconstructive, either breaking up and reassembling elements of an existing visual style or combining different styles to create a contrasting, eclectic aesthetic. Drinkwater describes this as

multi-literacy or diplomatic intelligence, the skill of constructing and apprehending eclectic narratives (2011:3). Such skills are often undeveloped in younger audiences, leading cultural critics to note "the gap between the wealth of visual experience in contemporary culture and the ability to analyse" (Mirzoeff 2002:3). A progressive educational approach is necessary in this regard, since singular historical styles are not self-aware enough to be de-constructivist and contemporary. A de-naturalising of popular culture is also essential, since this is the biggest perpetuator of the western status quo (Gude 2000:6).

2.7 SYNTHESIS

Despite "dismissing hallowed art historical standards of form and content", as well as its emancipatory ambitions and social critique, contemporary art remains restricted within elitist structures and institutions (Heartney 2008:8). This is continued in a South African context, where ineffective public institutions, a lack of non-institutional spaces and educational inequality tend to confine art to haute commercial and intellectual spaces such as the CTAF. Other issues contributing to elitism are strategies of shock and anti-formalism. Schools are implicated in this disparity, since approaches that emphasise narrow ways of seeing or producing are out of sync with the "complex connectivity" of contemporary society (Delacruz 2009:89).

My research methodology, which comprises the design of the study, sample selection and data collection, data capturing and ethical considerations, as well as data analysis, validity and trustworthiness is presented in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This research was designed to meet a perceived real-world problem, which was identified as a disparity between contemporary art and the wider public. This chapter serves to explain how this problem was researched within a local context and the use of specific methodology.

3.2 DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The following sections present an explanation of the research approach, research paradigm and research design.

3.2.1 Research approach and research paradigm

The research approach was inductive, since general concepts were concluded from specific observations (Thomas 2003:3). Other perspectives, such as a national report on the SA art industry and various theoretical readings were used to ground these generalised inductions, however.

The paradigm of the research was empirical since it was based on observable information, which involved recorded learner responses to the CTAF. These responses were produced through dialogue with the educator and a questionnaire, which means that the paradigm was also interpretative. This acknowledges the subjective nature of knowledge since “we cannot separate ourselves from what we know” (Costandius & Perold 2015:7).

3.2.2 Research design

The research was designed with the objective of investigating trends of elitism at the CTAF. The secondary objectives were to investigate trends in learners’ responses to this event and how education contributes to disparities between school learners and contemporary art.

The initial objectives were focused on analysing a specific event, the CTAF. Two case study designs were thus chosen as the means of research, since a case study provides an intense description of a small number of cases (Mouton 2001:149). The sample for the case study was made up of a unit of 24 high school learners who studied art, which was later split into two groups. The context of the participants allowed me to assess trends in their education, since they were being educated within the grade 10 to 12 stage of the National Senior Certificate (NSC), which begins to grapple with issues of contemporary art. These learners had also been influenced by more traditional art approaches learnt in earlier grades, however.

3.3 SAMPLE SELECTION AND DATA COLLECTION

The participants in this research were the Grade 10, 11 and 12 Visual Arts learners studying at Curro Durbanville in the Western Cape. The relatively small number of 24 learners taking Visual Art as a subject meant that a quota system of was used for sampling, whereby senior learners were pre-emptively chosen due to their experience of the CTAF as well as the NSC curriculum. The first case study was made up of 24 learners of varying cultural backgrounds. By the time of the second study, a few learners had stopped taking Visual Art, while others were unable to attend due to conflicting commitments, which left 19 learners in the group.

The data were captured in two formats. The first was a questionnaire (Addendum A) given to the learners directly after their outing to the CTAF, to which they recorded written observations. These questions were generalised without reference to specific artworks.

The second involved two discussion groups comprising of 10 and 9 learners respectively. Here learners recorded written responses (Addendum B) to specific artworks, which were supplied as laminated images (see Chapter 4 for examples) with no additional information besides the artist's name and title. This was done in order to simulate the way artwork was presented at the CTAF. Additional information regarding the artworks was then given by the educator, after which a group discussion in which learners discussed their initial perceptions was recorded.

3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

A consent form for participation in research was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee: Division for Research Development of Stellenbosch University (Addendum C). All learners who voluntarily participated in the research signed this consent form. Learners were made aware of a potential risk, since some artwork at the CTAF could be regarded as offensive to sensitive viewers. However, the fact that only a selection of artwork was shown to learners in the discussion group, and that learners had already viewed the artwork at the CTAF led to this risk being described as minimal. Consent was obtained from all the learners involved, as well as from their parents. Confidentiality was assured and the names of learners were not revealed in the research. Learners were instead coded from L1 to L24, and all information was stored by the educator who guaranteed confidentially.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Two case studies, in the form of a questionnaire and discussion group, provided data for the initial reading. This was collected in February and June 2016 respectively. A framework of 11 subthemes were identified from this data. These subthemes were then narrowed down to three main themes, which related more specifically to the research objectives. This follows Thomas's process of inductive content analysis, whereby the researcher starts to categorise data by identifying themes and sub-themes. This process is described in Figure 1.

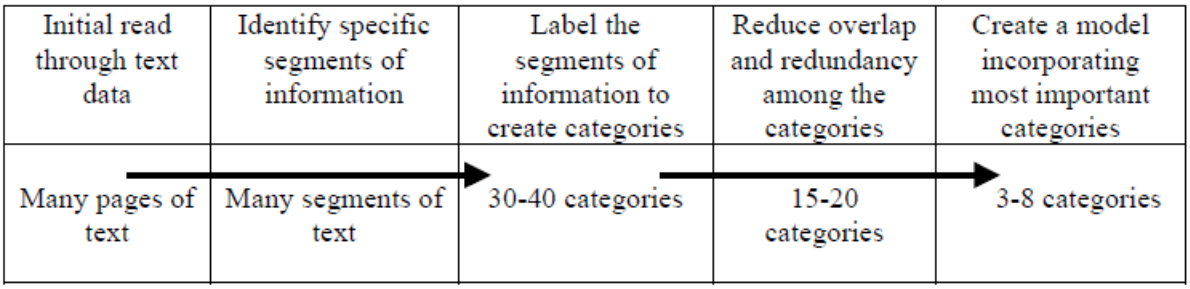

Fig 1: Categorisation of data (Thomas 2003:6)

The selected themes were aesthetics, conceptualism and institutionalism. These linked either to notions of elitism in contemporary art, learner response to the CTAF or both. Aesthetics focused on learner responses to the formal qualities of CTAF artworks, while conceptualism focused on learner responses to the various philosophies that underpinned these works. Both of these themes ended up shedding light on educational tendencies in school. Institutionalism focused on how learners interpreted the decision making of the CTAF.

3.6 VALIDITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

Interpretative or qualitative research risks subjectivity, since the "researcher's values are inherent in all phases of the research project" (Costandius & Perold 2015:8). I attempted to counter this in the first case study by allowing learners to complete the questionnaire without any guidance. I was more involved in the second case, as a facilitator, but I tried to make the process interactive and dialectical, by allowing conflicting opinions (see example on page 46). Dialogue was allowed to be as organic as possible, with different learners adding to the conversation and changing the thrust or flow as they determined. Conflicting opinions were also included in the coding of subthemes and final presentation of data.

Multiple measures of observation were also used to reduce the risk of subjectivity. These measures included written responses and dialogue in individual and group settings respectively. This links with

Trochim and Donnelly's concept of triangulation, which attempts to reduce error by multiplicity of investigation (in Costandius & Perold, 2015:8). The angle of approach also changed between case studies, with the first presenting more generalised questions and the second focussing on nine selected artworks. These artworks roughly represented the different mediums and approaches used at the CTAF, with a combination of newer strategies such as installation art as well as older approaches such as abstract art.

No specific hypothesis was used to drive these case studies, which is important in striving for neutral information (Mouton, 2001:150). While the initial idea of investigating elitism in contemporary art served as the background to this research, certain unexpected elements of data emerged outside of the initial paradigm. This included learner tendencies toward more narrow or uncritical ways of seeing, suggesting the necessity for an investigation into art educational approaches at school. The small number of participants that characterises case studies, however, generally limits making effective generalisations (ibid.). I tried to offset this by relating the data to the broad findings of the national report on the South African visual art industry, as well as the various theoretical readings reported in Chapter 2.

3.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter I have discussed the methodology used for the research. This was focused on a case study design investigating learner responses to the CTAF, which allowed for empirical data to be analysed using a qualitative and inductive approach. In the next chapter, I present the data collected from the research during 2016 as well as a discussion of the data.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of this thesis was to investigate elitism in contemporary art. In this chapter, this is approached through discussing how high school learners responded to the Cape Town Art Fair (CTAF) and how school is involved in creating disparities between contemporary art and education.

My empirical investigation focused on learner responses to the CTAF, with data captured from the learners on two occasions. The first was a school outing to the CTAF, in which learners recorded written observations about the event. The second concerned focus group discussions about a selection of images showing nine artworks from the CTAF which purposefully covered a range of mediums and content. I include images of these artworks where learners' comments refer directly to them or to a similar strategy of production.

The images were presented to the learners as they appear in this chapter. This was done to replicate the format of the CTAF, in which little or no additional information was given besides the artist's name and title.

4.2 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings from the investigation are presented under the themes of aesthetics, conceptualism and institutionalism. These represent the broad categories of questions that were presented to learners regarding their experience of the CTAF.

Every theme is introduced, after which the data gathered from learners are first presented within the sub-themes. Quotations from learners are presented in their original form except where bracketed words have been added for improved readability. I have tried to select a variety of quotes within each subtheme so as to accurately reflect different learner responses. Not all quotes from the original data were selected, either because similar ideas were repeated or the comments were too vague.

Various findings are discussed at the end of every theme. Learners are referred to by using the coding system presented in Chapter 3.

4.2.1 Aesthetics

Aesthetics refers to the visual appearance of art. Visual appearance is not the primary emphasis of contemporary art, however, since "art had been hampered by its physical embodiment" (Hopkins

2000:177). Concept and meaning are emphasised instead, with a variety of visual strategies needed to fit such ideas. This variety has led to the consideration of contemporary art as amorphous, potentially isolating more traditional viewers through its radical eclecticism (Heartney 2008:9). Schools are implicated in this situation if they emphasise a narrow formalist approach to art (Gude 2000:2).

The theme of aesthetics therefore focuses on a variety of visual strategies used at the CTAF, which form the subthemes. The first subtheme is naturalism followed by abstract art, naïve art/automatism, and minimalism. The third subtheme is pop art/readymade art, followed by installation art.

4.2.1.1 Naturalism

Naturalism refers to the style of representing things as they appear in a natural or real setting. Individual appropriation of this style means that naturalistic art varies between highly accurate and slightly interpretative depictions of reality.

Concerning naturalism, L21 described “the illusionistic art” as the most interesting type of art at the CTAF.

L22 described “the sculptures and the illusionistic art” as the most interesting type of art adding that, “the pieces of [minimalist] metal was not interesting.”

L19 wrote, “Most of the portraits were deep and emotional. These are what I liked most.”

L2 suggested, **“**There should have been more realistic art as well as more photograph art!”

L13 wished there had been more “easy-to-understand portraiture” adding that “the photography was really interesting and beautiful. Some of the [other] artworks look unfinished.”

L24 suggested other art at the CTAF would be more accessible if it “[had] the same amount of depth as the photos.”

L18 said, “I found all the photography interesting”, adding that, “the realistic works had so much more skills and wider varieties to work with [than abstract works].”

L15 commented that “the artworks that were a mixture of naturalism and abstract art was my preference.”

L16 enjoyed “the paintings of the Pieta by Wim Botha [because] it was so abstract yet recognisable.”

Fig 2. Aïda Muluneh, *Rules of engagement* (2016). Digital Photograph, 80 × 80 cm. (Artsy 2016).

Aïda Muluneh’s artwork was described by L8 as, **“**very clear and simple, which makes the message stronger to the average person with little knowledge. The artwork is also very symbolic with its use of colour which every single person can associate [with] something different.”

L21 wrote, “the symbolism behind what is shown in the image is strong, such as the hand on the stomach which to me means pregnancy and don’t fall pregnant before marriage.”

L6 commented, “Alles van die kunswerk lyk perfek en stuur die boodskap reg uit behalwe die hand lyk so bietjie vreemd.”[1]

L19 wrote, “I can kind of understand what’s going on but I’m not 100% sure because I don’t have a small description to read from.”

4.2.1.2 Abstract art, Naïve art/Automatism and Minimalism

Abstract art refers to the use of elements not recognisable as objects, such as line and colour. Naïve art and automatism refer to intuitive mark making which is often stylised or impressionistic. Minimalism refers to art that is reductionist, stripped of any unnecessary details or decoration. These styles are grouped together because they represent a more intuitive, visceral or symbolic strategy of representation. They are more connected to ways of feeling than seeing, or to process over product, capturing ‘not a picture but an event’ (Hopkins 2000:34). Traditional schooling

[1] ‘Everything of the artwork looks perfect and sends the message clearly except the hand looks a bit strange.’

emphasises the idea of a finished product over the process, however, which contributes to a disconnection between school and contemporary tendencies (ibid., 24).

L10 wrote, “I loved artworks that were thought-provoking and bold, but I don’t like pretty abstract art. Art is supposed to change your thinking and abstract art doesn’t.”

L6 said, “I can’t look at [abstract art] for a long time as I get bored quickly.” L21 wrote that “it doesn’t interest me as it is childlike.”

Fig 3. Senyol, *Moss Crossing* (2016). Mixed media on wood. 87 x 126 cm. (Salon 91 2016).

Responding to Senyol’s artwork, L1 wrote, “It confuses your mind with the use of abstract scribbles.”

L5 responded with, “This image is really colourful and busy but has no message behind it therefore I do not like it.”

L8 wrote, “Very busy, abstract, confusing, bad style, but I like the colours.”

L16 wrote, “I don’t know where to look. I become confused and anxious if I look at it.”

L19 wrote, “It looks like ordered chaos. They used repetitive colour schemes which makes it not look like a complete random mess.”

L4 described it as “kleurvol en droomwereld”,[2] while L18 commented that, “You see a different story every time” and L25 wrote, ‘The colours show the emotion and insecurity of the image.”

Referring to art with naïve tendencies, L11 wrote that “some [of the artists] draw like a child on white paper. I don’t understand why they exhibit that work.”

L16 wrote, “I didn’t like childish looking works.”

[2] colourful and dream world

Fig 4. Lady Skollie*, Hottentot Skollie*. Ink on paper. (Cape Town Art Fair 2016).

Commenting on Lady Skollie's work, L7 wrote that "[it] does not look finished off."

L22 commented, "I feel like this artwork should not have been displayed as I feel it is childlike…and I feel there is no technical ability."

L8 noted, "I am not interested in this artwork. The style is very child-like."

L4 wrote, "Die kunswek intreseer my nie baie nie. Dit het net neutral kleure."[3]

L21 wrote, "I do not have much interest in this painting as it seems childlike."

Commenting on minimalistic metal art, L6 wrote, "Dit was net metal wat gebuig word. Want selfs ek kan 'n stuk metal vat en so buig en ophang, maar hoekom?"[4]

Also commenting on this, L22 wrote, "The pieces of metal [were] not interesting."[5]

4.2.1.3 Pop Art/Readymade Art

Pop art and readymade art can be understood as the appropriation of popular culture or everyday objects in the realm on art. These strategies were grouped together since they share the common goal of "Casting art off its pedestal and into everyday life by elevating the commonplace" (Heartney 2008:40). The emphasis on high art and an aura of sophistication in traditional schooling contributes to a discord between school and contemporary tendencies, however.

L19 wrote that "the artworks which included bright, plastic-like colours which seemed childish I found most uninteresting".

[3] 'The artwork doesn't interest me. It only has neutral colours.'
[4] 'It was just metal that was bent. Because even I can take a piece of metal and bend it like that and hang it up, but why?'
[5] Only two learners commented on minimalist art.

L20 wrote that “The cartoonish, childlike artwork [was uninteresting], there didn’t seem to be as much technique.”

Fig 5. Jody Paulsen, *Korean-Boyz* (2016). Felt. (Brudyn 2016).

Responding to Jody Paulsen’s work, L22 wrote, “I don’t like the way there isn’t a focus point…I also find this artwork confusing as I feel it isn’t representing or portraying a message.”

L1 wrote, “I don’t like the artwork as a whole it’s too commercial.”

L16 commented, “[The bright colours] are a bit overpowering as I don’t know where to look.”

L2 wrote, “I really don’t like this artwork because to me there is no meaning what-so-ever, that there are fast-food signs and different types of cars.”

L3 wrote, “It’s extremely busy…For that, it intrigues me yet makes me want to walk away from it.”

Fig 6. Masimba Hwati, *Strong People Evolve I*, (2015). Mixed Media, 34cm. (Smac Gallery 2016).

Responding to Masimba Hwati’s readymade art, L2 wrote, “I absolutely love this sculpture because it describes a journey in ways that someone used all the resources along the way.”

L20 wrote that, “I don’t really understand it but I love its old, broken look. It seems both happy and sad at the same time.”

L19 responded, “This confuses me completely. As interesting as it looks I need the artists influence to understand this.”

L13 wrote, “It comes across tacky and looks as if somebody just glued random items on to a shoe.”

L3 commented that “it doesn’t resonate with me as something that belongs in an exhibition.”

L7 wrote, “Ek verstaan dit nie lekker die sculpture en maak glad nie sin nie.”[6]

4.2.1.4 Installation art

Installation art refers to three-dimensional art which is designed to occupy and change a space. This reflects the contemporary strategy of not confining the artwork to a flat wall, instead creating an immersive space that physically interferes with or engages the viewer.

L13 wrote that “there should be more installations and work to experience rather than just look at”.

Fig 7. Meshac Gaba, *Globalloon* (2013). (Hellerby 2015).

Meshac Gaba’s Globalloon was positively received with L25 describing it as **“**out the box”, L3 appreciating “the fact that it was so big” and L20 writing, “who doesn’t love a massive colourful ball?”

L3 commented that, “I only found out by doing this [group discussion] that it was someone’s artwork on display…It creates an inconvenience because of its size but, my word is it beautiful to look at it.”

L22 commented, “It doesn’t have depth in its meaning it’s just a ball hanging from the sky.”

[6] ‘I don’t understand this sculpture well and it makes no sense.’

4.1.2.5 Discussion: AESTHETICS

Learners showed a clear preference for naturalistic art over non-naturalistic art, responding particularly to portraits. This emphasis on positivism and physical quantification is a tendency in western education (Drinkwater 2011:1). Naturalistic preference in a western context links with Mirzoeff's claim that "human experience is now more visual and visualized than ever", with photography as the medium of choice (2002:4). This visualisation is perpetuated by advertising and the rise of personalised photography, both of which are positivist ways of seeing.

Post-colonial writers argue instead for multiple centres of knowing which are more inclusive of social or spiritual systems of comprehension (Dei & Kemp 2006:6). Feedback from the learners thus proves this western inclination to see and quantify, rather than to feel and perceive. Learners therefore seem more resistant to other ways of seeing and knowing, since they are used to the strategies of quantified naturalism emphasised in school. This contributes to a disparity between schools and industry since contemporary art "no longer [exists] in an aesthetic bubble" but is "frequently challenging, provocative and 'difficult'"(Hopkins 2000:1).

Naturalism does, however, offer an accessible point of entry for learners to engage in art that is culturally specific or has multiple meanings. Aïda Muluneh's 'Rules of engagement' is a good example of this, with issues of cultural, gender and identity being dealt with in a specifically Ethiopian setting. The use of well-known symbolic objects and colour combined with clear photographic quality makes the work accessible, with many learners able to grasp a basic understanding of the issues it deals with.

Learners generally struggled to engage with abstract art. The realistic or illusionistic emphasis in school teaching contributed to this positivist way of seeing. Abstract art instead refuses to be 'reducible to objects', thereby confusing positivist thinking (Berger 1972:93). This links to Barthes's reception theory in which the artist's message is not definitive, but allows the varied interpretations of viewers to complete the artwork (Heartney 2008:123). Such an approach requires a more active viewer, since viewers need to be conscious of their own role in making meaning. One learner confessed to feeling anxious when looking at abstract art, suggesting that learners are used to a prescribed message, as opposed to non-linear, incomplete or ethereal art.

Art that made use of naïve tendencies or automatism likewise was not valued by learners, who noted that it seemed to lack technical ability. This, again, showed the disparity between school and contemporary methods, since intuitive mark making is "full of thoughts not necessarily yet couched in language" (Massumi 2004) and thus is often used as a visceral strategy capable of "[unlocking]

subconscious dilemmas" (Drinkwater, 2011:4). School strategies instead tend to focus on the finished product, while covering up the process or imperfections involved in attaining the final image. This links to the Renaissance ideal of "the conquest of visual appearance" in which rationality and technical achievement is the ultimate aim (Danto 1997:125).

Readymade and Pop Art appropriation was generally not appreciated by learners since it conflicted with notions of high art or the art object which is traditionally surrounded by an aura of luxury or religiosity (Berger 1972:21). The art object is also defined as "an object whose value depends upon its rarity" (ibid.). Mainstream or everyday appropriation contradicts this thinking. The philosophical shift between an exclusive aesthetic and the democratisation of all mediums therefore seems to confuse learners, many of whom associate art as existing within an aesthetic preserve. Many learners referred to readymade art as sculpture, perhaps showing their inclination toward ideas of the art object.

Learners reacted positively to Meshac Gaba's installation of a giant balloon since it encouraged physical engagement over passive looking. Passive looking seems the default approach to two-dimensional art at school, since such pieces are normally reduced to being flatly positioned against a wall. This again alludes to Berger's notions of high art and the art object, something to be owned, rather than an entity in its own right (ibid., 93).

4.2.2 CONCEPTUALISM

Contemporary art characteristically deals with a variety of issues since "its essential nature [is now] conceptual" (Hopkins 2000:177). These issues are potentially intangible, however, since conceptual strategies such as non-prescriptive and eclectic narrative or dematerialisation are not easy to decode and place substantial responsibility on the viewer. The amorphous and multi-layered nature of conceptualism can thus unknowingly isolate more traditional or uncritical viewers from contemporary art.

Learners in the focus group were asked how easily they were able to understand the images of selected artworks. The images were presented in the same manner as at the CTAF, which generally only included the artist's name and title of work alongside the artwork. None (0 out of 18) of the learners considered the work as easily understandable. Fifty percent of the learners (9 out of 18) indicated that 'after a bit of time I understood it', while the other 50% (9 out of 18) indicated that 'some artworks remained confusing'.

L17 wrote that, "many of the artworks have too much depth for someone who doesn't have an understanding of art."

L15 wrote that, **"**too much emotion or depth might scare [the average person] off."

L16 wrote, "No, you should like art [to appreciate the CTAF]. I think it's hard to make it understandable for non-art appreciators."

L2 noted, "I enjoy artworks with a story to tell."

Asked how the CTAF should change in order to be more accessible, L1 wrote, "No they shouldn't, the 'average person' should just open their minds!"

Learners were then presented with additional information about the artwork, such as artist biography and strategy. They were asked to indicate how much the additional information helped them to engage with the artwork. Sixty-one percent of the learners (11 out of 18) indicated the additional information as extremely helpful, 33% (6 out of 18) indicated it as 'moderately helpful', while 6% (1 out of 18) indicated the information as 'a little helpful'.

Asked what type of art they would have excluded from the CTAF, L3 suggested they would remove "some conceptual art that didn't seem to require a lot of effort".

Referring to Ed Young's installation, L5 wrote that, "Artists who had one thing like hammers in the wall shouldn't display it unless there is a strong meaning behind it".

L6 noted that, "We talked to [Young] and he said no [artists] really challenged themselves."

Young's work links with the aesthetics of provocation, something which either engages or polarises audiences due to anti-conformist or provocative content (Heartney 2008:17). Young's comment was presumably a reaction to standardised notions of the self-contained art object, which he felt needed to be challenged.

The following subthemes explore learner responses to more specific conceptual approaches and issues. The first subtheme is critical thinking, critique and the role of the artist. The second subtheme is relevance, followed by identity. The last subtheme is appropriation, pastiche, and irony.

4.2.2.1 Critical thinking, Critique and the Role of the Artist

This subtheme represents the contemporary understanding of the artist as those "[interrogating] the ontology of the present" (Smith 2009:2). This represents a shift from modernist 'art for art's sake' to a more engaged role with society, in which naturalised ideologies of dominance are challenged or deconstructed. Critical thinking and critique is central to this approach since it reclaims a sense of

possibility, countering the "[t]he complacent repetition of 'truths'" that maintain the status quo (Greene 1995:380).

L8 commended art at the CTAF for being "thought provoking" although later commenting that "all the art seems to criticize and I also want a positive artwork."

L1 enjoyed art that "provokes my thinking of how the world works."

L9 wished for there to be more "positive art".

L13 described critique as, "[showing] flaws and discrimination in society" and "[expressing] oppressed feelings about society".

L10 wrote that "artists like Diane Victor approach things boldly and address issues we're often too afraid to talk about."

L6 wrote that, "a few artworks I saw had to do with what goes on in our country. Most had Zuma's face on."

L8 described critique as a way for artists "to tell the rest of the public what they think of social of and political issues."

L19 wrote about critique, saying "[artists] can do this without being judged."

L1 described the role of art as "whatever you want it to be…The artist is there to express… they are entitled to [it]…the art @ the fair is done by THE ARTIST!!"

Commenting on the role of the artist, L3 wrote, "the artist breaks society's rules and says/does what they want".

L15 described the artist's role as "to remind humanity about our spiritual self".

L17 described the artist's role as "to evoke emotions and allow viewers to escape from reality."

L18 wrote that, "Artists for me do not have a specific role."

L10 wrote that "an artist gives something to society that no-one else can."

L20 wrote that, "at this fair the artists' role [was to] show our culture and people of this country to foreigners."

L11 commented that the CTAF showed that "many pro artists exist and they are selling and announcing their artwork through exhibition."

4.2.2.2 Relevance

The notion of contemporary is rooted in 'tempus', suggesting the intrinsic conditions of this present time (Smith, 2009:2). Contemporary art should thus be relevant, relating to the major issues shaping present society. These issues are usually focuses around pluralistic societies and contesting ideologies of dominance.

Learners responded positively to the question of whether art at the CTAF dealt with relevant social or political issues. They cited these issues as those dealing with the legacy of South Africa's political history, racial issues, feminism and challenging stereotypes. Diane Victor's art was especially noted for dealing with sensitive or taboo issues facing women. L18 described her experience of the CTAF as "different from the art museums".

4.2.2.3 Identity

Notions of self and the body are key areas of contestation in contemporary art, since ideologies of dominance have traditionally used dismissive stereotypes based on race and gender. Contemporary art therefore encourages critique of identity and stereotypes.

Regarding female identity, L3 commented that, "the painting you find in every art gallery, the classic paintings of women who are trying to say something is becoming boring and predictable."

Asked what artworks they perceived as interesting, L5 wrote, "I found the body sculptures really interesting."[7]

4.2.2.4 Appropriation, Pastiche and Irony

Appropriation, pastiche and irony are considered important strategies in contemporary art, since these represent a method of critique or "a style of using styles" (Danto 1997:10). These strategies represent a challenge to viewers, though, since they require multi-literacy, the ability to comprehend a variety of past and present styles.

[7] These were the only two quotes directly commenting on body art or identity art. Issues of female identity are extensively explored under the subtheme of irony (responses to Lady Skollie's artwork).

Fig 5. Jody Paulsen, *Korean-Boyz* (2016). Felt. (Brudyn 2016).

L2's comment on Jody Paulsen's artwork was, "I really don't like this artwork because to me there no meaning what-so-ever."

L5 wrote that, "This artwork is too busy and is takkie."[8]

L8 commented, "I feel like it is almost like plagiarism…the pop-art culture I also believed had already passed and this artwork is outdated."

L20 wrote, "This doesn't really seem like an artwork to me, it just looks like a mix of pictures that already exist."

L14 described the artwork as "[showing] how the Korean lifestyle is".

L16 wrote, "It makes me think of pop art and appropriation."

L25 wrote, "I actually love this artwork because the message is very clear…It's the entire unhealthy obsession with man made things and the unhealthy lifestyle."

[8] Misspelled, should be 'tacky'.

Fig 4. Lady Skollie*, Hottentot Skollie*. Ink on paper. (Cape Town Art Fair 2016).

Responding to Lady Skollie's artwork, L2 wrote: "I don't like this painting at all because it feels like this artist want[s] to show what every female should look like!"

L13 wrote: "I dislike this as it portrays women as objects, finding beauty from their bodies, not their faces or personality."

L3 responded that, "[The artist] is either praising her own body or showing impossible standards and the contrast between those two are what confuses me."

L6 wrote: "Dit beskryf seker hoe Lady Skollie lyk...Maak nie sin nie…onvoltooid."[9]

L16 wrote: "I feel it is an unrealistic representation…Not all Hottnetots look like this."

L21 described the artwork as, "very bias on the subject of all black woman [should] look like this."

L22 commented that "this also supports the negative stereotypes of African woman."

L24 wrote that, "[the name] is very offensive…as well as the artwork being too explicit."

L 20 wrote: "I love it! I know I shouldn't but I do. That is why I love art. It gives us the freedom to draw what we want."

[9] 'It surely describes what Lady Skollie looks like…It doesn't make sense…incomplete.'

L18 was the only learner who seemed aware of the historical reference, describing it as a "reflection of the Hottentot Venus".

Fig 8. Ricky Dyaloyi, *'Zisina Zidedelana I'* (diptych), mixed media on canvas, 150 X 300 cm. (Pintrest 2016).

L6 described Ricky Dyaloyi's painting of people queuing in a township as "racial stereotyping".

L12 wrote that "The artwork is in a certain sense quite hilarious to me. As I often see black people standing in rows at ATMs and this reminds me of it."

L2 wrote, "To me this looks like black people standing in a poverty line to show the dryness of Africa."

L3 wrote, "The purpose and meaning behind it remains unknown to me."

Fig 9. Steven Cohen, (2016). (Cape Town Art Fair 2016).

Commenting on appropriation in Stephen Cohen's performance, L1 wrote,
"I love this art artwork. I think it expresses his personality and his mask that he shows people but not what is inside."

L2 wrote, “It look[s] horrid. I cannot understand it at all. There’s no meaning.”

L5 responded, “This looks horrible…his message isn’t coming across properly. Personally I’m not a fan of his or her work.”

L6 suggested Stephen Cohen’s work should not have been included at the CTAF, “because his art made no sense and looks creepy [my opinion]”.

L8 described Cohen’s work as, “Confusing, but it does grab attention as it strays from the norm. But it is not a positive feel. It has a satire-atmosphere.”

4.2.2.5 Discussion: CONCEPTUALISM

Critique was often perceived by the learners as negative, with several learners wanting more ‘positive art’. This is out of sync with the nature of contemporary art which “[necessitates] a resistant character” due to the compromised political world in which it finds itself (Hopkins 2000:1). Contemporary art therefore defines itself as a voice of critique or as an active role-player in a democratic society. The dialectical nature of democracy and contemporary art again seems at odds with more status quo thinking of traditional schooling, typified by the educator’s “narration sickness” (Mayo 2005:168). Narrow learning at school therefore contributes to a disconnect with the questioning, critical nature of contemporary art.

Keats’ symbiotic notion of truth and beauty, however, suggests that the desire for more ‘positive art’ is more grounded than initially thought. Hughes and Kramer criticise contemporary as overly-obsessed with critique, creating a “culture of complaint” instead inspiring achievement (Heartney 2008:366). Defenders of critique are conversely suspicious of more easy-going art, arguing that “aesthetic pleasures usually serve the interest of a political elite” (ibid.). Perhaps there is a specific need for youth to be grounded in beauty before the more serious task of critique or “the pressure of the 24hour emergency zone called life” takes hold (Winterson in Campbell & Martin 2006:28). The disjunction between contemporary critique and the aspirations of youth may therefore be natural.

Learners’ notions of critique seemed narrow, though, either “[telling] the rest…what they think”, focussing on institutional politics, or critiquing “without being judged”. Self-critique instead is an essential part of contemporary thought. Atkinson describes knowledge as a journey of “stammering knowing” (2001:308) which counters “smooth stories of self” (ibid., 309). Notions of critique

therefore need to include self-critique, otherwise critical thought is reduced to finger-pointing. This echoes Schapiro's thoughts on self-critique when he says that "[artists] wish to be free creators…but they wish to participate in the most advanced consciousness of their society and to influence it by their work" (Schapiro 1994:207).

The role of the artist was interpreted as both contributing to society and furthering individual expression. Notions of individual expression were particularly strong, however, with many learners commenting along the lines of an artist "[doing] what they want", thereby perpetuating the idea of artists as a rule unto themselves. This is problematic in that it polarises relationships with structures of power, leading to the treatment of the artist as rebel who "comes in through the back door like a second-class citizen" (Campbell & Martin 2006:11). Unbridled freedom can therefore isolate artists from other structures in society, perpetuating an elitist identity that is often reinforced by western notions of autonomy. Issues of public accessibility were also dismissed as public narrow-mindedness or the fact that "you should like art [to appreciate the CTAF]" (L6). This links to Costandius and Rosochacki's observation of western art as historically autonomous, even to the detriment of public accessibility (2013:3).

The notion of the artist as an isolated entity is also contrary to Atkinson's idea of "my multiple messy selves" (2001:308). This echoes Schecher's comment that "No-one is exclusively an artist" since we at the same time are citizens, members of families or other communities (Campbell & Martin 2006:39). Learners at high school level understandably are more detached from such structures however, since they are neither tax-payers nor economic contributors to families. Learner understandings of the role of the artist can therefore perpetuate aloof or elitist stereotypes.

Two learners defined the role of the artist as essentially transactional, equating professionalism with 'selling and announcing their artwork' or 'to show our culture…to foreigners'. This narrows the concept of art to that of a commodity in which critical dialogue is secondary to trading interests and links with the elitist idea of high art in which the meaning of the work is secondary to its market value (Berger 1972:23). Models such as the CTAF also reinforce this idea since they are essentially aimed at foreign or high-end buyers. This links to Ray's criticism of spaces that are depoliticised through their exclusivity (Ray 2006:3), with Hundt describing art fairs as a business model based on a buyer and seller elite (Art Times 2015:8).

The exclusivity of the CTAF is also arguable, however, since most learners noted the range of social and political issues that were addressed by artists. The CTAF was thus significantly described as "different from the art museums", indicating the relevance of issues dealt with. This, in part, can be understood by the position facing South African artists, in which public or alternative spaces for

cultural production remain either mismanaged or under-funded (Ibid.). The CTAF thus still draws from the cream of local artists, whose content is usually politicised and socially relevant. Perhaps the issue remains over whether this content is contained within the "safety valve" of an exclusive space "in which social critique may be contained and action be deferred" (Costandius & Rosochacki 2013:4).

Learners' comments on art dealing with female identity were divided, with some appreciating Diane Victor's exploration of taboo issues. L3, however, described identity art as "too common". This ties in with the danger of such contestation becoming self-contained trends within an intellectual system (ibid.). Such art remains paradoxically controversial yet elitist, confined within the "self-perpetuating oligarchy of art institutions" (Johnson 2003:730). Gender issues remain central to contemporary critique however, since the language of western illusionism is perpetuated in advertising where "men act and women appear" (Berger 1972:47). Contemporary art tries to perpetuate alternative narratives.

Strategies of appropriation, pastiche and irony were generally misinterpreted by learners, with most mistaking artworks as reinforcing past styles or stereotypes. Learners generally failed to comprehend the critical distance between the artist and their chosen medium or content, instead believing them to be one. This seems paradoxical, since Mirzoeff defines visual pastiche and eclecticism as the dominant mode of cultural production since the 1980s, magnified by the internet's ability to draw on disparate sources (2002:4). Mirzoeff suggests the reason for failed comprehension is due to "the gap between the wealth of visual experience in contemporary culture and the ability to analyse [it]" (ibid.).

Perhaps the fault lies with contemporary tools of appropriation, which have become increasingly efficient while diminishing the space needed for critical thought. The ease of 'copying and pasting' has allowed learners to construct eclectic systems of knowledge without proper understanding of its origins. This links with Greene's critique of shallow learning which perpetuates "[t]he complacent repetition of 'truths' which have become trivial and empty" (1995:380). Greene argues that critical thinking does not happen naturally without deliberate tutoring of these skills (ibid., 382). The educator thus faces both the challenge of uncritical patterns of pedagogy and learning. The nature of contemporary art is also challenging in this regard, with its "[m]ultiplicity of micro-narratives" and "apparently anarchic pluralism" (Heartney 2008:11). Such eclectic tendencies can contribute to elitism, since learners lack the necessary critical skills comprehend such variety.

4.2.3 INSTITUTIONALISM

Institutionalism refers to the structures of power through which art is shown, categorised or written about. These structures are usually well established and confined to a certain preserve or way of thinking (Berger 1972:32). Costandius and Rosochacki suggest this way of thinking is predominantly Eurocentric and intellectualised, creating a closed "sophisticated circle of producers" (2013:5). Richards points out that such elitism usually has a veneer of inclusion, since it covers a diversity of relevant issues (ibid.). The following subthemes explore the various tendencies of institutionalism as observed at the CTAF. They are diversity, autonomy and commerce.

4.2.3.1 Diversity

Diversity in the form of cosmopolitan societies is seen as the essential nature of contemporary society, with Weinstein defining it as "*the* modern political problem" (2001:1). Contemporary art purports to be inclusive of such diversity, whether through the variety of mediums or artists represented.

Learners were generally positive about the CTAF due to its perceived diversity, scoring the experience at an average of 8.3 out of 10. L8 wrote that "there was a big variety", L18 and L19 said "there is something for everyone" and L24 wrote that "it was something new and different."

L3 noted that, "As good as the art is, if you step back and look at what is there, everything almost looks the same."

Learners were also asked whether there were other artists or types of art that should have been included at the CTAF. L1 wrote, "More less fortunate less popular artists. Some students high school and up. And more street art."

L3 suggested "more installation art and performance art".

L19 mentioned, '"Performance, graffiti and more watercolour. Those tend to appeal to a lot younger youths."

The following exchange from the group discussion touches on the issue of inclusion:

Learner 1: What I think they should have had more of is people's art, the less fortunate, who aren't necessarily as popular. Or even somebody who is just a student in high school or university, doesn't have to be experienced.

Teacher: So at the Design Indaba for instance they have a whole section called 'Emerging Designers', it's school people, people from poor communities…okay so that's a good point.

4.2.3.2 Autonomy

Autonomy is defined as being independent or free from external control. Artistic autonomy is often romanticised as "unsullied individualism, an inner-directed free-spirit who answers to the muse, not to the state" (Campbell & Martin 2006:1). Institutional autonomy is more complicated, however, since institutions represent an important space for public debate, contestation of meaning or political will. Costandius and Rosochacki argue that such contestation is limited by the elitist positioning of art institutions, which are often separated from authentic public interaction (2013:4).

L9 and L19 both suggested the CTAF "could have been made more interactive" with L10 noting that "it was really nicely set out but it would have been better if it was more interactive."

L8 suggested that more information or artist interaction would help since, "Then I can relate more and it would be more interesting."

Asked whether they thought the average person would be able to appreciate the CTAF, L21 wrote, "I don't think so, and to help them they can give out a booklet explaining the message behind each artwork."

L18 wrote, "The only lost opportunity was the lack of artists to speak about their works."

L20 suggested the idea of, "[showing] smaller versions of the Art Fair at all halls across the province so more people could reach it."

L18 wrote that, "if you do not like art then you would not go there anyways."

L20 also commented that "the average person doesn't know what is at the Art Fair," with L3 suggesting the CTAF should "involve communities and tell people about everything that will be there."

L23 wrote that "because of the cost involved…I don't think everyone will be able to afford it."

The following group discussion expands on this:

Learner 2: Because there is no information about the artist or artwork you can judge the artist [only] from your perspective.

Teacher: So it becomes very opinionated because it's based on limited information?

Learner 3: If they had more information then everything would make more sense.

Learner 1: But some art isn't even made to make sense.

Teacher: So maybe we don't want to over-explain it?

Learner 13: But I think maybe there shouldn't be explanations, the artwork should be clear about message they want to bring.

Teacher: Okay so maybe it doesn't need a whole lot of written descriptions, maybe the artwork itself…

Learner 13: …must have a strong message.

Teacher: But why is some artwork unclear?

Learner 1: Because they want to reflect on what you feel, what you feel toward the art.

Learner 13: Maybe because they want to reflect on the past and history, things people don't know about.

Learners were then asked what they would change about the CTAF to make it more accessible to people. Almost all suggested that more supporting information about the artwork and artist should be made available, that artists should be available for discussion, and ticket prices should be lower. L2 suggested that artworks should be categorised by mediums.

4.2.3.3 Commerce

Commerce is considered the act of trading on a large scale. The CTAF 2016 was thus commercially successful with over 14 000 visitors and almost R30 million in sales (Artthrob 2016). Of more interest however was whether multiple objectives or audiences were served by a commercial event such as this.

Learners were accordingly asked at which groups they thought the CTAF was aimed. Based on their experience of the fair, 56% of learners felt buyers were the main target market (10 out of 18), 22% suggested the general public (4 out of 18) 17% suggested art learners (3 out of 18), while 5% were undecided (1 out of 18).

4.2.3.4 Discussion: INSTITUTIONALISM

Learners felt that there a wide variety of art was represented by the CTAF. This is consistent with Danto's description of "the pluralism of the present art" (Danto 1997:112) where "artists were liberated to do whatever they wanted to do" (ibid., 125). The diversity of art at the CTAF in this sense seemed non-elitist, refusing to be boxed in by "a master narrative with painting as the long-reigning hero" (ibid., 114). L3, however, noted that, despite the diversity, much of the art work somehow seemed similar. This links to the idea of an increasingly professionalised industry in which art is made by an intellectual circle of producers (Costandius & Rosochacki 2013:4).

Structures of representation seemed more exclusionary, with learners commenting on the lack of representation of student artists or artists from disadvantaged communities. In the group discussion, this was noted as something achieved successfully through the Design Indaba's 'Emerging Creatives' booth, a comparative event at the Cape Town International Convention Centre. The CTAF, instead, was limited to gallery-contracted artists. This again links with Costandius and Rosochacki's idea of art institutions as closed "sophisticated circle[s] of producers" (2013:4). The CTAF did introduce a new space for eight emerging artists called 'Tomorrow/Today'. This was restrictive, though, with the curator noting that "we could only show people who had a gallery in the Fair" (Artthrob 2016).

Learners also commented on the lack of interactive art at the CTAF, for instance installation art, body art and performance art. While space limitations and the buying and selling model of the CTAF limited the amount of spectacle art, this also created a potentially elitist situation in which only art that is more psychically confined was exhibited. This links to elitist notions of high art or the art

object, which is at odds with the dematerialised or provocative trends of contemporary art (Heartney 2008:17).

Learners similarly noted the lack of graffiti art at the CTAF. This is also difficult to exhibit and is more suited to contestable public spaces. Such contestation is necessary however, since contemporary art is characterised by "A constant negotiating of meaning with our differing contemporaries" and "an interrogation of the ontology of the present" (Smith 2009:2). Perhaps this proves that more authentic forms of public art are incompatible with the "safety valve" of institutional spaces (Costandius & Rosochacki 2013:4). Aesthetics of graffiti were used in many paintings, but these surfaces were confined to the size and frame of the work, hence limiting the subversive, contestable nature of graffiti.

The setup of CTAF gallery booths were similarly described by learners as exclusive and difficult to engage with. Learners based this perception on the lack of artist information and the unavailability of artists for discussion. This links to Hundt's comment on Art Fairs as business models tailored for buyers and collectors, with limited public interaction or accessibility. Hundt warns of undervaluing public discussion and contestation "Without [which] the art market will be held captive to who can write the biggest cheque" (Art Times 2015:8).

The lack of information on artists also links to Berger's notion of mystification for the sake of driving up cash value, in which "Works of art are made unnecessarily remote" (1972:11). Such mystification is "linked with cash value, but always invoked in the name of culture and civilization" (ibid., 15). When artist information is available, it is usually just as mystifying, with Beckett noting that contemporary art is conventionally "shown or sold with a garnish of rhetoric" (Beckett 2013).

While learners noted the amount of art dealing with important social and political issues, they essentially perceived the positioning of the CTAF to be distanced from communities and public engagement, with one learner suggesting that the CTAF should become a travelling exhibition. This links with Costandius and Rosochacki's idea that "Art institutions…provide the frame which separates art from life", leading South African theorists to question "why there are so few engagements with alternative audiences and communities in a country marked by extreme inequality" (2013:5).

Lack of audience diversity and community engagement also confirms the effects of apartheid spatial engineering. This links to Wainwright's comment on Cape Town city planning in which "both natural landscape features and manmade infrastructure were employed as physical barriers to keep the different racial communities as isolated as possible" (Wainwright 2014). The location of public art

institutions in historically white areas further emphasises this divide (Hagg 2010:12). The CTAF is similarly positioned near the Waterfront, a desirable location for wealthy art patrons and foreign collectors, but equally distant from poorer communities.

4.3 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The presentation of data gathered from learner experiences of the CTAF is aimed to reveal trends of elitism in contemporary art and how schools are involved in creating disjunction between education and the industry. The data suggested that the school emphasis is on representational art and notions of the art object, creating disjuncture with contemporary strategies which are frequently eclectic, amorphous and process-orientated. Contemporary strategies of appropriation and irony often are not understood by learners, with critique often seen as something negative. The CTAF was perceived as diverse yet elitist, since it was restricted to a specific place and specific type of artist. The next chapter focuses on the conclusions and implications of the discussion of data presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This research topic was chosen because of disparities I have experienced, both as a learner and educator, between how art is taught at school and at university. These differences isolate school learners and the public from effective engagement with contemporary art, and are heightened by elitist tendencies within the industry.

The research sought to investigate various manifestations of elitism in contemporary art, drawing particularly from learner responses the CTAF. Linked to this was exploring how school education is implicated in creating disparities between educational practice and responses to contemporary art.

The research was designed to follow an inductive approach and made use of an interpretive empirical paradigm. This was undertaken by conducting two case studies with learners who took art as a subject at the Curro Durbanville Private School. The case studies comprised of questionnaires and focus group discussions about the learners' experience of the CTAF.

The research was limited to the specific context of Curro Durbanville, an independent high school in the Western Cape. This involved 25 grade 10 to 12 learners, who participated in focus group discussions in my art class after school.

This context was chosen primarily because I am an art educator at the school, have an existing relationship with these learners and access to classroom facilities. The particular learners were also taking art as a senior elective subject, suggesting that they were interested and able to engage in critical thinking about art.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

The following sections cover the factual and conceptual conclusions and implications, based on the findings of my research. The research is then critiqued, followed by a discussion on further research possibilities.

5.2.1 Factual and interpretive conclusions and implications

Factual findings were based on learner responses to the CTAF as well as a selection of images covering nine artworks from the CTAF. These responses were thematically divided under the themes aesthetics, conceptualism and institutionalism. The findings within these themes were analysed either to uncover elitism in contemporary art or explore disparities that exist between school and industry.

Learners showed a clear preference for naturalistic over non-naturalistic art, showing engagement with portraiture, realistic, photographic, or illusionistic art. Learners generally struggled to engage with abstract art, commenting on its lack of a clear message and its undefined quality, with L16 noting, 'I become confused and anxious if I look at it'. Art that revealed naïve or intuitive tendencies was described as unfinished, lacking technical ability or child-like. Some learners engaged with Pop Art but most felt it was 'too commercial' (L1), 'over-powering' (L16) or lacking meaning. Readymade art was generally seen as too common or tacky and not suitable for an exhibition. Learners responded positively to installation art, engaging with its physicality and element of surprise or inconvenience.

None of the learners described the selected CTAF artworks as easy to understand, with 50% indicated them as moderately challenging and 50% as very challenging. When presented with additional information on the selected artworks, 61% of the learners described such information to be extremely helpful. Most felt that members of the public who are uninclined to consider art would be unable to appreciate the CTAF, and that the fault lay with them for not liking art or being close-minded.

Art that fell under the title of conceptual art was generally not appreciated, with L3 suggesting "that didn't seem to require a lot of effort" or that there was not a proper message behind it (L5). Most learners appreciated the fact that the art was "thought-provoking" (L8), although many described critique as negative and expressed a desire for "more positive art" (L9). The role of the artist was described in an exclusive light as revealing unbridled expression and freely saying what they think without being judged. The fact that most of the art addressed relevant issues made it 'different from the art museums' (L18). Strategies of appropriation, pastiche or irony were generally misinterpreted as reinforcing stereotypes, being offensive or committing plagiarism, instead of as layered critique.

Learners appreciated the diversity of art shown at the CTAF, noting that **"**there [was] something for everyone" (L18, L19). It was noted, however, that no street art, student art or underprivileged artists were included, and this is compared with the Design Indaba where a significant portion of the exhibition space is allocated to young designers. Learners unanimously felt the need for more information or artist interaction, indicating "Then I can relate more and it would be more interesting" (L8). It was felt that the CTAF was only for those who are able to appreciate art, with most of the public ignorant of or uninvolved in the event. Concerning the target market, 56% of learners felt that buyers comprised the main target, while 22% suggested the general public and 17% thought that it was aimed at art learners.

5.2.2 Conceptual conclusions and implications

Learner preference for naturalistic and realistic art suggests the influence of an increasingly photography-oriented world culture (Mirzoeff 2015:4). This is perpetuated by photographic advertising, about which Berger (1972:129) writes: "[N]o other kind of image confronts us so frequently." School is implicated in this way of seeing since traditional aesthetics and "the conquest of visual appearance" (Danto 1997:125) are taught as foundational (Gude 2000:2).

This is both a way of seeing and a way of being, however, one which reduces the "complex connectivity" of lived reality to material objects and notions of spectatorship or desirability (Delacruz 2009:89). This is achieved by emphasising "the lustre, the solidity of what it depicts… [defining] the real as that which you can put your hands on" (Berger 1972:88). This creates a disparity with contemporary art, which uses eclecticism, layering and automatism as a way of challenging dominant ideologies and validating alternative, connective or spiritual systems of knowing (Dei & Kemp 2006:6). Learners likewise seemed unaware of other anti-aesthetic trends. Comments that pop and readymade art seemed "common", "tacky" or "too commercial" suggested preference for high art in which the art object is surrounded by an aura of excellence or luxury.

Teachers should instead "have the courage to let [their] understandings of the complexities and uncertainties of the times show in [their] curriculum" (Gude 2000:3). This means challenging art curriculums to become more investigative, fluid and "seriously exploring non-Western art for its contributions to ways of being and knowing, not treating it as interesting sides to the main menu" (ibid.,4). The promotion of alternative visual strategies that challenge realistic representation is vital in this regard, as are production methods that are collaborative and "ego-releasing" (ibid.).

Perceptions regarding the role of the artist could be defined as critical yet narrow. Dealing with societal issues was considered important, but this was offset by resistance to self-critique, critique as negativity and the idea of the artist as indifferent to audience reception. Learners perceived contemporary art as relevant and different from art museums, but most of them had difficulty comprehending significant meaning in the art. The lack of supporting information on artists was unhelpful in this sense, with stand-alone artworks seeming mystified and remote. Contemporary strategies of appropriation or irony were often not comprehended, however, suggesting narrow critical skills. The teaching of investigative skills at school level is important in this regard, encouraging learners to "neither exclude nor to glorify the products of contemporary commercial culture, but rather to see them a components In the formation of contemporary identity" (ibid., 7).

The CTAF was positively perceived as showing diverse types of art, although strategies of spatial contestation such as graffiti were excluded. It was also perceived as exclusive to professional or contracted artists, which was confirmed by the special projects curator who noted, "we could only show people who had a gallery in the Fair" (Artthrob 2016). The main target market was perceived as buyers and collectors, with limited attention paid to the general public or education. This is the result of a complex situation, in which a lack of government support (Hagg 2010:8) has led to private institutions focussing on economic sustainability (Cape Town Art Fair 2016) to the detriment of educational ambitions. The autonomous nature of western institutions however also contributes to this elitism (Costandius & Rosochacki 2013:3).

5.2.3 Contribution to field of research

While a substantial number of studies on elitism in art are available, the research of elitism in a contemporary context is still relatively new. The situation of this study, which is set in post-apartheid South Africa, is also critical in highlighting how past segregation has influenced public engagement with art. The study of new models such as the CTAF is important in this regard, since buyer-and-seller models such as this have quickly become sustainable and popular, thus impacting the future landscape of art in South Africa. Case study research on tendencies among South African high school learners can also contribute to a better understanding of art education practices in the local context.

5.3 FURTHER RESEARCH

For further research it might be helpful to investigate alternative or non-institutional spaces of contemporary art production, especially those that are different to the buyer-and-seller model of the CTAF which seems limited to a wealthy westernised audience. The lack of effective public art institutions adds to this issue, proving the need for spaces that can effectively engage a wider demographic of South Africans and provide opportunities for up-and-coming artists.

Another area for research could include the investigation of art production strategies in South African education. This could uncover trends that contribute to disparities related to contemporary art. It might also be helpful in highlighting strategies that are successfully contemporary, giving other schools the means to transition if their approach is too traditional or uncritical.

5.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This research was aimed at investigating the manifestations of and reasons for elitism in contemporary art. Initial research indicated the tendency for western art to operate in an autonomous, intellectual and wealthy preserve. This was confirmed in a South African context in

which public institutions and private buyer-and-seller models remain largely inaccessible or irrelevant to the wider demographic. The lack of alternative spaces for presenting works of art makes these models the dominant means of public engagement with art.

Education is implicated in this disparity however, since an over-emphasis on formalism, aesthetic ability and the art object has contributed to uncritical and outdated strategies of production. Learners, in addition, are influenced by a western culture largely influenced by photography which emphasises the outward looking of the spectator or a narrow way of seeing. The cultivation of alternative ways of seeing and being is therefore essential in this regard.

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LIST OF ARTWORKS

Figure 2. Aïda Muluneh, *Rules of engagement* (2016). Digital Photograph, 80 × 80 cm. [Online]. Available: https://www.artsy.net/artwork/aida-muluneh-rules-of-engagement [2016, Oct. 31].

Figure 3. Senyol, *Moss Crossing* (2016). Mixed media on wood. 87 x 126 cm. [Online]. Available: http://www.salon91.co.za/?attachment_id=8575 [2016, Oct. 31].

Figure 4. Lady Skollie*, Hottentot Skollie*. Ink on paper. [Online]. Available: http://www.capetownartfair.co.za/emerging-artists-bare-their-hearts-through-art-at-the-cape-town-art-fair/ [2016, Oct. 31].

Figure 5. Jody Paulsen, *Korean-Boyz* (2016). Felt. [Online]. Available: http://www.brundyn.com/image-archive/jody-paulsen-selected-works/manhunt_int.jpg/ [2016, Oct. 31].

Figure 6. Masimba Hwati, *Strong People Evolve I*, (2015). Mixed Media, 34cm. [Online]. Available: http://www.smacgallery.com/artist/masimba-hwati/ [2016, Oct. 31].

Figure 7. Meshac Gaba, *Globalloon* (2013). [Online]. Available: https://rebekahsreviews.com/2015/08/16/arts-activism-and-the-paris-climate-summit/globalloon/ [2016, Oct. 31].

Figure 8. Ricky Dyaloyi, *'Zisina Zidedelana I'* (diptych), mixed media on canvas, 150 X 300 cm. [Online]. Available: https://za.pinterest.com/pin/297237644128169050/ [2016, Oct. 31].

Figure 9. Steven Cohen, (2016). [Online]. Available: https://www.facebook.com/CTArtFair/ [2016, Oct. 31].

ADDENDUM A

CAPE TOWN art Fair

NAME:_____

GRADE:_____

1. What was your overall experience of the Art Fair? Rate your experience 1 – 10 and elaborate.

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. What type of artwork did you find interesting and what was *not* interesting. Why?

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. Do you think the average person is able to appreciate the Art Fair?

If not, how would you change the Art Fair to make it more accessible or understandable?

_____

_____

_____

4. What do you think is the role of the artist in society? How does the type of art at the Art Fair reflect the role of the artist?

_____

_____

_____

5. Does the Art Fair deal with important social or political issues? Elaborate.

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU!

ADDENDUM B

CAPE TOWN ART FAIR SURVEY

NAME OF LEARNER:_____

ARTWORK SECTION

1. **Write a respond to the artwork – in what way do they interest, not interest or confuse you?**

IMAGE 1 'Rules of engagement' by Aïda Muluneh

_____

_____

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IMAGE 2 'Korean-Boyz' by Jody Paulsen

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IMAGE 3 *'Strong People Evolve' by* Masimba Hwati

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IMAGE 4 'ZISINA ZIDEDELANA I ' by Ricky Dyaloyi

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IMAGE 5 'Hottentot Skollie' by Lady Skollie

IMAGE 6 'Globalloon' by Meshac Gaba

IMAGE 7 Stehpen Cohen, performance

IMAGE 8 'Moss Crossing' by Senyol

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. How easily were you able to understand the artwork on your own?

A. Easily understandable

B. After a bit of time I understood it

C. Some artworks remained confusing

2. How much more did the additional information help you engage with the artwork?

A. Little (25% or less)

B. Average (about 50%)

C. A lot (75% or more)

3. Which of the following groups do you think the Art Fair is predominantly aimed towards?

A. The general public

B. Art learners from school

C. Art collectors and buyers

4. What would you change about the Art Fair to make it more accessible to people?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. Were there any other artists or type of art that you think SHOULD have been included at the Cape Town Art Fair? Why?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. Were there any other artists or type of art that you think SHOULD NOT have been included at the Cape Town Art Fair? Why?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

ADDENDUM C

UNIVERSITEIT•STELLENBOSCH•UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT:

High school learners' response to the Cape Town Art Fair:

Investigating Otherness and Accessibility in Art

Dear Parent/Guardian

My name is Warwick Goldswain and I am an art teacher at Curro Durbanville. I would like to invite your child to participate in a research project for my Master's thesis entitled: **High school learners' response to the Cape Town Art Fair - Investigating Otherness and Accessibility in Art**

I intend to use this research as part of my Masters in Art Education thesis which is being completed through the Stellenbosch University Fine Art department. Your child was selected as a possible participant in this study because they attended the school outing to the Cape Town Art Fair in February this year.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study is designed to assess how those outside or on the fringe of the art industry engage with contemporary art.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer your child to participate in this study, we would ask them to do the following things:

- Be part of a 40 minute group interview in which three learners or more are chosen per group.

- Be subject to questions and images concerning artwork viewed at the Cape Town Art Fair.

- To be completed at Curro Durbanville in one of the art classes at an appropriate time during term 2 so as not to interfere with exams.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

- Minimal. Learners will be exposed to artwork already viewed at their outing to the Cape Town Art Fair in February. The Cape Town Art Fair has no age restriction and as such is considered appropriate for under age viewers with adult supervision.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

- Art learners will benefit from a university-level discussion on contemporary art. Critical thinking will therefore be stimulated. This is a vital skill for writing IEB discursive essays in matric.

- The art industry stands to benefit from a better understanding of how those outside or on the fringe of the industry engage with and perceive contemporary art. This could help produce strategies to make art more accessible to the wider public while stimulating a greater interest toward art at high school level and creating more buyers at an adult level. This seems especially important in a country where only 2% of the public regularly attend art exhibitions.

- Participants will not receive payment for their involvement.

5. CONFIDENTIALITY

The interview will be recorded so that the data can be analysed. This information will be stored on a personal computer which only the researcher will have access to. The identities of the school, learners and educators will be protected and will not be published in the thesis or resulting academic articles.

6. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The researcher may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

7. QUESTIONS OR QUERIES

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact the researcher Mr. Warwick Goldswain or the course supervisor Dr. Elmarie Costandius at warwick.g01@curroholidings.co.za OR elmarie@sun.ac.za

8. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

By signing below, I …….. agree that my child may take part in a research study entitled **High school learner's response to the Cape Town Art Fair: Investigating Otherness and Accessibility in Art** conducted by Warwick Goldswain.

I declare that:

- I have read the attached information leaflet and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that my child taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to give consent.
- I may choose to withdraw my child from the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- My child may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in his/her best interests, or if he/she does not follow the study plan, as agreed to.
- All issues related to privacy and the confidentiality and use of the information I provide have been explained to my satisfaction.

Signed at (place) ..... on (date) …….. 2016.

.....

Signature of participant

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ via this letter. He/she was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions.

This communication was conducted in English and no translator was used.

_____ _____

Signature of Investigator **Date**

ADDENDUM D

HESTER HONEY
LANGUAGE CONSULTANT
91 BRANDWACHT STREET, STELLENBOSCH 7600
TELEPHONE / FAX 021 886 4541
E-mail: hestermh@netactive.co.za

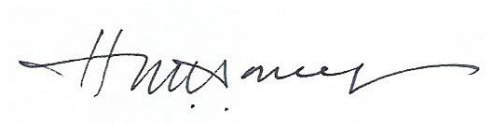
THIS IS TO CONFIRM THAT I HAVE EDITED THE THESIS TITLED

ELITISM IN CONTEMPORARY ART:
INVESTIGATING HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS' RESPONSES TO THE CAPE TOWN ART FAIR

by

Warwick Goldswain

AND HAVE MADE SUGGESTIONS PERTAINING TO LANGUAGE USE TO BE IMPLEMENTED BY HIM.



H M Honey

(27/10/2016)